

**MODERNIZATION  
AND  
THE HINDU SOCIO CULTURE**

Modernization  
And  
The Hindu Socio-Culture

AKHILESHWAR JHA

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*Fiction*

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*Non-fiction*

INTELLECTUALS AT THE CROSS ROADS·

The Indian Situation

## PREFACE

This book is born out of reflections on the historical process of modernization of the Afro-Asian societies, particularly the Indian society, first initiated by the colonial governments. That this process, for good or for ill, is irreversible should be clear from even a cursory glance at modern world history. Perhaps, it is for good that it is so.

The problems the Afro-Asian countries in general, and India, in particular, are facing today cannot be solved by the outdated means and methods of yesterday. Each one of the problems is gigantic. With population explosion and education expansion, each is constantly growing in bulk, and calls for more scientific and technological solution than the tradition-bound societies have so far sought.

In fact, the only slogan appropriate for the developing societies is: "Modernize or Perish". In India, Jawaharlal Nehru's call, "Produce or Perish" meant actually the same thing, for Nehru was convinced of the need for total modernization of the entire Indian social system.

Unfortunately, however, the socio-political goal of total modernization has never been whole-heartedly accepted by the Indian social and political elites. There have been many reasons for this: the influence of Mahatma Gandhi on the national thinking, lack of material resources, and, above all, the unmodernizing traditional Hindu socio-culture, which conditions the entire Indian thinking on social, economic and political issues.

Lack of clarity of views on the need of adopting the goal of total modernization of the society has led to confusion of values with pathetic consequences. While certain segments of the Indian society have continued to retain *in toto*, even after Independence, whatever modern framework they had received from the British rulers, the more essential aspects of the Indian

society continue to be traditional, which adversely affect the functioning of the superficially modernized segments

The Indian colleges and universities, for example, are modelled after the modern institutions of higher learning in Europe and America, but they have failed to produce the desired results because those parts of the society from which the students and teachers come are still wholly traditional

Similarly, the Indian industries may have installed modern machines, but they have failed to achieve the level of production or excellence in production expected of them because both labourers and management executives come from traditional homes and subscribe wholly to traditional values

Opposition to modernization also often derives from a failure to distinguish it from Westernization. But the distinction is clear. Westernization is imitation of the Western social manners and fashions of food, speech, dress and so on. Modernization, on the other hand, is concerned with deeper aspects: intellectual outlook, rational thinking, scientific humanistic values and so on. Westernization may eventually lead to modernization, but not necessarily. In the Indian society, by and large, it has not.

In fact 90 per cent of Westernized people in the Indian society continue to be wholly traditional in their outlook, beliefs and values while the truly modernized ones may not be Westernized. The classic example is that of Mahatma Gandhi, modern mind in the traditional garb, though his followers always missed his modernity.

This book is broadly divided into two parts. *Part One*, entitled MODERNIZATION FROM THE TOP deals with the nature of the growth and development of the process of modernization. It is shown that ever since the colonial days modernization has been imposed upon the common people by the political elite at the top: first the colonial British and, then, the nationalist Indian. As a result, the modernization process has not permeated to the deeper layers of social and individual life.

But, on the other hand, it must be conceded that it was far from easy to make the modernization process percolate beneath the surface aspects of the Indian society, the behavioural pattern of which, on the whole, is conditioned by the predominant

Hindu cultural beliefs and attitudes. This forms the subject-matter of *Part Two* entitled RESISTANCE FROM THE BOTTOM. Each of the essays in this part is concerned with some prominent feature of the Hindu culture in relation to some particular aspect of the modernized or modernizing society. Together, they are intended to show how the Hindu-culture-dominated Indian society has resisted the process of modernization from really transforming it to richer and fuller state of affluence and creative happiness.

Two chapters of Part One and most of the chapters of Part Two have already appeared in somewhat modified form as separate articles in the various Sunday editions of the *Statesman*, New Delhi, the *Times of India*, Bombay and in the *New Quest*, Pune, during 1976-1977.

Evidently, this book is not addressed to the social science specialists, but to a large number of intellectually alert general readers, who may feel concerned with the socio-cultural plight of India today. I have confined myself to raising questions only, and not taken the liberty of providing answers. But I believe that meaningful answers can easily be found, once the questions themselves are recognized as important and faced boldly with an open mind.

Delhi  
December, 1977

A. JHA



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Part One

MODERNIZATION FROM THE TOP

## *ONE*

### **INTRODUCTION PROBLEMS OF MODERNIZATION IN TRADITIONAL SOCIETIES**

Change occurs perpetually in all societies, old or new—change in the method and technique of production of subsistence and wealth, change in thinking and feeling, change in attitudes to life and the universe, and, correspondingly, change in social organizational pattern. Change is not only law of nature, it is also law of society, though the operation of this law in the social realm may not always be as readily visible as in nature

But change differs in volume, pace and quality from society to society, depending upon the factors that start off the process of change, and the prevailing general cultural circumstances in which the factors happen to operate

Generally, the process of change begins in times, and as a result, of calamities and crises. Natural calamities such as an earthquake, flood, famine, etc., sometimes lead to the disruption of societies settled for centuries in the more or less same ways of living and force them to adjust themselves to new experiences. Similarly man-created crises such as the rise of tyranny, aggression by foreign powers, war on a wide scale, revolution, etc., also lead to changes in the society. To this category also belong great scientific discoveries and corresponding technological inventions which deeply affect man's attitudes and outlook, and cause evolution of new social institutions and readjustment in the existing ones

In modern times, the beginning of which is traced to the fourteenth century European Renaissance, far more changes have occurred in the societies of the world as a result of man-made crises rather than natural calamities. The changes caused by the latter are necessarily very slow, almost imperceptible,

fragmentary and directionless, while those caused by the former are rapid, immediately visible and voluminous, and, except in rare cases, have a sense of direction.

This is why during the last about 500 years, there have been infinitely greater changes in the societies of the world than in the preceding 5,000 years. For it is during this period that great scientific discoveries, amazing technological inventions, fierce wars and great revolutions have taken place and each of them has given a mighty push to the process of social change.

Now it has so happened that most of the man-made factors of social change first came into operation in European countries. It is tempting to ask why did they first occur in Europe, and not in Asia or Africa, but a complete answer to the question is not possible to give here. It may have been on account of their cultural traditions, emanating originally from the classical Greece and blending, later on, with Christianity—traditions which promoted exploration of reality beneath the appearance, or, rather, of the relationship between the two.

Another reason could be the geographical situation of Europe which gives its countries energizing climate throughout the year and creates physical needs which have to be satisfied for sheer survival, and which require far greater effort to be satisfied than is required for the purpose in the countries of Asia and Africa.

Whatever the reason, the important point, relevant to the discussion of social change in the modern world, is that the forces of rapid transformation of the lives of men were first generated in the European countries—Italy, France, Germany and Britain being the leading ones among them. Another important point to be noted in this connection is that irrespective of the forces of change, the process of change itself has never been smooth. It has been accompanied by upheavals, revolutions, bloodshed, war, resulting in the short run, in great human miseries. The first great scientists of modern times such as Kepler and Galileo were also the martyrs of the new science.

The times of Renaissance in Europe were marred by fierce religious wars in Germany and elsewhere. The French Revolution caused untold miseries to the common man and the orgy of bloodshed continued for years. The Industrial Revolution

in England was stretched over a century or so and, in the beginning, it brought nothing but suffering to the common man and destroyed all that was considered good in the traditional English society. Ultimately, however, the Industrial Revolution brought conveniences and comforts to the common man, which he could never have dreamt of in the traditional social set-up.

To the countries of Asia and Africa, the forces of the rapid social change came through the colonial rulers, all of whom belonged to Europe. Inspired by the Renaissance spirit of exploration and inquiry, of discovering new ideas and new lands, and armed with superior intellectual powers and greater material resources, the European men sailed to newly discovered regions and gradually took them under their political control. On the one hand, they economically exploited the colonies to their own enrichment. On the other, they also introduced in the colonies the results of the scientific discoveries and technological inventions which had originally taken place in their home countries.

As a result of this introduction of new ways of living, new machine technology, new industries, and also of new social institutions such as democratic government, liberal university education, free economic competition, etc., changes of far reaching significance started occurring in the colonial societies with varying degrees of intensity.

Thus, while these societies got the rare advantage of having the fruits of modern knowledge and technology without having to suffer for them in the way the European societies had suffered they were at the same time unable to make the best use of the modern knowledge because of the political domination by the foreign rulers.

With the end of the Second World War, however, the colonial era also came to an end. The countries of Asia and Africa emerged as new nations, free to adopt their own course of social development. In each of these societies, a tussle inevitably arose between the native traditional culture and the modern political and economic institutions bequeathed by the departed colonial rulers.

Since modern institutions were associated with colonial rule, the resurgent national spirit looked upon them with suspicion.

But, ironically enough, the new nationalist leaders too were the products of the same modern knowledge as was associated with the colonial rulers. These leaders have invariably retained the alien political, economic and educational institutions in their traditional societies in the hope that the latter would some day become as powerful as the European ones.

This process of the change occurring in the traditional societies as a result of the introduction by the colonial rulers of the modern knowledge and modern socio political institutions, has been termed as *modernization*.

Originally, it was and is still, used in economics, commerce and industries. It means adoption of newly discovered techniques of production, management, accounting and so on with a view to creation of more wealth at minimum cost.

In sociology the term came to be used in the early fifties when the social problems fermenting in the newly emerged nations caught the attention of the world political thinkers and sociologists.

In sociology, however, the term has come to acquire a wider and deeper meaning. It means not only change in the external structure of social institutions, but also in the internal attitudes and beliefs in the members of the society in correspondence with the external social change. In the complete sense of the term it means a simultaneity of change both at the external social level and at the internal intellectual, emotional and spiritual level of man living in the society.

In India the process of modernization is facing stupendous problems of various kinds historical political and cultural. In fact these are not separate problems each is linked in an inextricable manner with the other. Any attempt to deal with these problems separately or together as a group, with the objective of seeking honest answers is bound to run counter to the established official views of India's past as well as recent history propagated by the generally committed historians. But, fortunately no attempt of that kind is called for here.

This book deals with only two vital issues in the context of the process of modernization the political and the cultural. And, in dealing with these problems no attempt is made at a thorough and scholarly examination of facts. Rather, the attempt is to highlight certain well known and proven historical

and cultural facts and relate them to the process of modernization in the Indian society. The method here is macroscopic rather than microscopic, providing interpretation and re organization of established facts rather than bringing new facts to light

It would, however, be helpful to state here certain basic assumptions underlying this book. One is complete modernization of all aspects of social life is the only effective answer to India's crushing problems, such as unity and economic prosperity. Second, in the socio-cultural situation prevailing in India, partial modernization is worse than no modernization. Third, any attempt at reviving the nationalist spirit or, retaining the traditional socio cultural pattern of living, is beset with dangers of stagnation and disintegration. And, any one can see that these dangers face the Indian society right now.

If there is no escape from modernization, why is not India providing full blooded boost to the modernization process? But the question is, what do we mean by "India"? India is a land of villages where more than 80 per cent of the population still lives. Are these rural people India? Euphemistically speaking, perhaps they constitute the real India, but, unfortunately, it is not up to them to choose. Even if it were, they would not be able to for, they are even today hardly aware of anything existing beyond their traditional world.

India, therefore, means the Indian political and intellectual leaders, who inherited the political power from the colonial British rulers. These leaders were English educated intellectuals most of them England-returned, who had fed their imagination and intellect on the thoughts of the liberal Western thinkers. They had severed themselves from the crippling and confining traditional attitudes to life and become modernized men with passion for political freedom and social reconstruction.

But, when they came to demand political freedom, it was necessary for them to elicit the support of the common people, who had the least idea of what political freedom was or, for whom intended. These leaders, therefore, could enlist their support only by arousing their traditional religious and nationalist feelings and that was what they did with Gandhi's entry into Indian politics.

A dichotomy was thereby created in the Indian social



life between the ten per cent (a liberal estimate) modernized or partly modernized intellectual political leaders and their followers and the 90 per cent tradition bound common people. The leaders fought for modern social values, while the people forced them to compromise with the traditional values. This, evidently led to the partition of the country and, after Independence, caused hurdles in the way of social reconstruction and modernization of educational and cultural institutions.

Therefore, the question as to why does not India choose to modernize its society thoroughly (knowing fully well that there is no escape from it) is actually directed at the political and intellectual elite. Having led the country to freedom and taken upon themselves the responsibility of modernizing the society from the British rulers it is for them to go ahead boldly to discharge their responsibility.

The reason why they have not shown the boldness required for the purpose is their own petty selfish interest at the expense of the long term interest of the Indian society. Instead of leading the society to fuller modernization, they are themselves succumbing to the strong traditional pulls prevalent in the society. Consequently they are trying to keep up modernized appearance in the society, while the reality is a hodge podge of confusing traditions.

That the traditional pulls in the society are extraordinarily strong and subtle and capable of frustrating all attempts at modernizing has become clearer after Jawaharlal Nehru's colossal endeavour to build a modernized, affluent India. He was a great modernizer—and the boldest. But even he, having laid the foundations of modern India, could not pull the society out of its traditional grooves. On the contrary, the age old traditional Indian society easily traditionalized many of Nehru's modernizing programmes.

This is because Nehru in his wild enthusiasm for modernization, grossly underestimated the peculiar strength of the deeply entrenched traditions of the Indian society. With a man like Nehru who had been bred and brought up in very affluent and Westernized circumstances and had received his education in the best of English public schools in England, the underestimation of the strength of Indian traditions was not surprising. He had never lived amidst the traditional people, nor known

them intimately. But even if he had, it would hardly have made much difference. For the subtlety of the Indian traditions is so infinite that it has ensnared and frustrated the most wary of the Indian political elite.

What are these "Indian traditions"? Again, no answer can be really adequate. For, India is a land of many traditions deriving originally from the Aryans and the Dravidians and also from Bramhanical Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Mohammedanism, Sikhism, Christianity and a countless variety of tribal religions. It is a land of many nations and many communities, the traditions of one blending with those of the other.

Nevertheless, there is one thematic core which runs through all the blends, and that core is derived from the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. It got hardened during the Bramhanical era. In course of time, as the Mohammedan invasion started, it developed a mechanism of survival. It involved a dual operation on the one hand withdrawal into its own rituals and customs, and, on the other, an indifferent tolerance of other religious practices. Since most of these came to India along with different invaders and conquerors, who were primarily interested in political power and economic exploitation of the land, the dual mechanism of the Hindu traditions worked admirably well. In fact, in course of time, it even succeeded in indirectly influencing those of the invaders and conquerors, who preferred to stay on in India. Gradually, Hindu cultural traditions absorbed almost as much of Muslim tradition as the latter did of the former.

The result was that by the middle of the nineteenth century, religiously minded Hindus were separate from Muslims, but as far as their socio cultural attitudes and beliefs were concerned, people of one community came to share, consciously or unconsciously, those of the other community and *vice versa*. Hindus learnt Urdu and relished its literature. And Muslims learnt ancient Indian classical music and sang it with abandonment. They became indistinguishable in respect of dress, social courtesy, food (excepting pork and beef), and their ideas of joy and sorrow, of good and bad.

In this blend, the predominant colour is provided by the core theme of the Hindu socio cultural traditions. The Muslim

came to share Hindu's attitudes to work, education, family life, science, technology and the world in an indistinguishable manner. Laziness, sloth, dependence on fate, fear of novelty, and glorification of poverty and backwardness are some of the features which characterize the attitudes of people of both the communities.

Therefore, what is said in this book about Hindu socio-culture could be found to be equally relevant to the Muslim socio-culture, in fact, it would be relevant to other socio-cultural groups including the Christians. Indian Christians, in this sense, are Indians first, and Christians later. They have nothing in common, say, with European Christians, except their faith in Jesus Christ.

However, the reason why I have chosen to isolate Hindu socio culture for analysis in the context of modernization is not merely that it forms the core of the Indian socio-culture. The reason is that I am a Hindu and I know its religio and-socio cultural traditions more intimately than those of other Indian communities.

With such unmodernizing socio cultural traditions prevalent in the Indian society, the question that disturbingly recurs in our mind is: Can Democracy really survive in India? For, to a very great extent, the survival of Democracy in India depends upon the success of modernization.

It could also be stated the other way round, which only proves the close links that exist between democracy and modernization. The tempting alternative is the emergence of a benevolent dictator wedded to modernization, but it is only delusory. No dictator can remain benevolent after a time, and even if he did, modernization under dictatorship defeats its own purpose. But, the real and abiding process of modernization involves the whole people on their march towards self-reliance, affluence, freedom of the individual, and great heights of intellectual and cultural attainments.

## TWO

### THE MEANING OF MODERNIZATION

"Modernization", as a term in sociology is used to denote the complex process of social change from the traditional way of living and thinking. In a dispassionate discussion of the topic, value-judgements as to whether the "traditional" is good and the "modern" is bad or *vice versa* should have no place.

Modernization is a historically inescapable and even irretrievable process of social change, which has been, in a very wide sense, going on ever since man came out of his ice-age cave and discovered fire.

However, in a narrow and specific sense, the term connotes the changes that have occurred and are occurring now in the various societies of the world since the advent of European Renaissance and the Age of Reason with emphasis on rationality and scientific thinking. This marked a definite break with the past traditions and a fresh reordering of the socio-political structure, economic system and the whole attitude of man to human relationship, society and the universe.

"The Western people", says Cyril E. Black, "have been undergoing this process for some five centuries and peoples in the least-developed regions for less than a century. Modernization is a part of the universal experience..."\*

The assumption evidently is that sooner or later, willingly or unwillingly, all societies of the world will have to choose to *modernize their economy and social and political institutions*. Europe, from this point of view, was fortunate in being the home of the great Renaissance, the strong impact of which was bound to be felt sooner or later by other parts of world.

The term, "modernization", however, gained currency in

\* Cyril E. Black, "Change as a Pre-condition of Modern Life" in *Modernization*, Ed. Myron Weizer, Basic Books, New York, 1966, p. 19.

sociological discussion only after the Second World War, when a large number of the countries in Asia and Africa became politically free from European colonial rulers. During the long period of colonial rule, these countries had been the recipients of the modern, social, political and educational institutions from the West. Now they were free to dispense with them and build entirely on their own traditions.

But, howsoever they had glorified their national traditions during the period of the struggle for freedom, they immediately realized that they were wholly irrelevant to the gigantic problems they faced as independent nations. So they chose to retain all the modern institutions implanted by the colonial rulers. But, since these institutions had been imposed on the society by the foreign rulers and had not grown from the soil after political freedom, they faced resistance from the newly aroused national-traditional sentiments. This led to various kinds of complications and conflicts in the spheres of politics, economics, education and culture.

The term "modernization" was used to characterize the pattern of the developmental process of the Western Society as adopted or intended to be adopted by the political leaders of the newly emerged nations.

Naturally, therefore, this term has often been confused with "Westernization". But there is a clear distinction between the two terms, and a clear understanding of it is necessary to grasp the nature of the problem. It is evident that the modern attitude to life and universe grew first in Europe with Renaissance in the fourteenth century and also matured there in the course of the subsequent centuries. This attitude led to scientific and, later, industrial revolutions which brought about deep and fundamental changes in the structure of social, economic, political and educational institutions. This attitude thus, led to the production of wealth on a large-scale and the devising of ways and means of its fair and proper distribution. Finally, it was this attitude which made Europeans great explorers of the world and, finally, colonizers of a large part of it still completely in the dark about the modern knowledge that had grown in the West. Since in these parts of the world modern knowledge reached through the western rulers, "modernization" appeared to be the same as "Westernization".

"Westernization", however, means sheer imitation of the social habits and conventions of the European, as (now) also of the American people. Mainly these habits relate to choice of food and drinks, dress, conventions of arranging parties, going to clubs, conversing in English, and so on. But a Westernized man may not necessarily be a "modern" man, though, perhaps, arguably, a "Westernized" man is likely to grow into a "modern" man sooner than others.

By merely adopting Western habits and social manners, a man does not become modern. And, conversely, a man by retaining traditional habits and dress does not remain necessarily traditional. The classical examples are provided by Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, whose dress and food habits were purely traditional, but in their intellectual attitudes, they could be said to be "modern". Any man with money can adopt Western habits and manner, for Westernization is possible only with material affluence and a desire to affect modernity.

"Modernization" refers to the deeper change in man's way of thinking and feeling, a change in his whole attitude to life's problems, the society and the universe. Some of the typical marks of a modernized man have been noted by Alex Inkeles in his essay entitled "The Modernization of Man",\* and a summary of the essay would be helpful here.

One of the outstanding marks of the modern man, according to Inkeles, is "his readiness for new experience and his openness to innovation and change". Secondly, he must be capable of forming or holding "opinions over a large number of the problems and issues that arise not only in immediate environment but also outside of it." Thirdly, "he shows more awareness of the diversity of attitude and opinion around him, rather than closing himself off in the belief that everyone thinks alike and, indeed, just like him." In other words, the modern man is "democratic" by nature rather than dogmatic. Fourthly, "he is oriented to the present or the future, rather than to the present." Fifthly, he believes that "man can learn, in substantial degree, to dominate his environment in order to advance his own purposes and goals, rather than being dominated

\* See, Myron Weiner (Ed.) *Modernization*, Basic Books, New York, 1966.

entirely by that environment." Sixthly, he believes that "the world is calculable, that other people and institutions around him can be relied on to fulfil or meet their obligations and responsibilities . . . In other words, he believes in a reasonably lawful world under human control." His seventh mark is his "awareness of the dignity of others." His "faith in science and technology, even if in a fairly primitive way" is his eighth characteristic. And, lastly, he "is a great believer in distributive justice. That is to say, he believes that rewards should be according to contribution, and not according to either whim or special properties of the person not related to his contribution."

In brief, the modern man is distinguished by his rational beliefs, scientific outlook, readiness to master the environment and investigate into the "mysteries" of nature, willing participation in social-political activities, and tolerance of views other than his own.

It is clear that the modern man is almost diametrically opposed to the traditional man. The latter lives in an intellectually closed world. He is averse to innovation and experiment with new ideas or ways of living. To him, there is no truth beyond his tradition, nothing good beyond his traditional faith. He regards his traditions fixed and eternally valid and his superstitious rituals beyond question.

In any society, there are both traditional men and others who happen to be dissatisfied with traditional way of life and crave for change. Even in the European or American society of today, not all men and women are modern. There exist not only degrees of modernity, but also men and women, in however small number, who have not been able to shed their traditional attitudes completely. And yet, we call those societies modern not only because the number of "typically traditional" men and women is negligibly small, but because, under the pressure of modern socio-politico-economical institutions, they too are changing.

As opposed to this, the number of the modernized men and women in the traditional societies of Asia and Africa is so small that instead of their influencing the overwhelming number of traditionalists, the latter tend to stifle them. For it is possible to have a traditional society with modern institutions,

Or, rather, a structurally modern society with traditional people. Of this type are the societies of what are called the Third World countries.

This incongruity is the gift of the modern history. The colonial rulers of Europe during their long regime foisted the structures of modern social institutions in the traditional, almost primitive, societies of Asia and Africa. The latter did not feel the need of the modern institutions and were not at all willing to accept them.

In course of time, a small section of the people, belonging to the upper middle class, first aligned themselves with the rulers, received modern education, imbibed Western ideas, and, then became political leaders who, after gaining political freedom, replaced the foreign rulers. The masses, in general, remained alienated from this process of change and, therefore, were both incapable and unwilling to participate in the functioning of the modern institutions.

Thus, a very queer and baffling state of social change has come to obtain in this part of the world. The societies of Asia and Africa have adopted modern institutions. They have adopted democratic forms of government, free or mixed economy, liberal school, college and university educational systems, built big scientific laboratories and technological institutes, constructed law courts for the purpose of dispensing legal justice; and so on.

But, despite having these institutions of a modern society, the societies of Asia and Africa cannot be called modern, because of the fact that people living in these societies have not become modern. And, they have not become modern, because they have not felt sufficiently induced to take a willing part in the functioning of the modern social institutions, and also because of the fact that the hold of traditions on these people is far stronger than on the people of Europe during the pre-modernized days of the fourteenth century.

*The case of India in this respect is infinitely more curious than that of other Afro-Asian countries. Here the pull of the tradition against modernization has been much stronger than elsewhere, because the traditional socio-cultural heritage of India has been infinitely richer, and, in certain respects, peculiarly modern" in spirit too. This is now recognized even by*



the modern Western thinkers that the *Vedas* are the products of inquiring minds, though, of course, the extant Indian cultural traditions are not *Vedic* but *Brahmanic* or rather a corruption of both

What is of more relevance is that these traditions have remained essentially unchanged through the ages and unaffected by the political upheavals in Indian history. These traditions are based at present largely upon superstitions, dogmas and rituals, but originally they may be seen as deriving from well developed intellectual systems of astronomy, astrology, metaphysics, ethics, social behaviour and so on.

So, to be a traditional Indian in the true sense of the term, that is in accordance with the spirit of the *Vedas* and the scriptures, is not essentially taken to be anti modern. Hence sometimes it is claimed that Indianization may be anti Westernization, but not anti modernization. On this basis, several reformers of the Indian religious and cultural traditions would appear to be modernized. In fact, such claims are frequently made with reference to Shankaracharya, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda and others.

Here, however, a subtle distinction has to be made between the term "modern" and "modernized". A man may have developed sufficient rational faculty to see shortcomings in the religious cultural traditions of his society so that he feels urged upon to reform them. Every reformer, to that extent, is a "modern" man. He is rationalizer of traditional beliefs and rituals. But he is not "modernized" yet, though he might be on way to it, and also pave the way to it for others.

A "modernized" man questions the very basis of traditions and rejects them in favour of rational and logical ideas. He begins to see man's fate bound with the fate of the society, man as fulfilling himself only in activities, which are relevant to his society. A "modernized" man has developed the scientific temper and a belief in the immense possibilities of technological development. To him, all segments of the society appear to be inter related and interdependent: politics with economic, both with industrial, the three with technological, and finally all the four with educational and cultural segments.

This explains why a modernized man is possible only in fully modernized society—a society with modern social struc-

tures manned by people fully aware of their responsibilities and a voluntary will to carry them through.

In India, therefore, to be a true Indian with a critical attitude to the inherited traditions may appear to be "modern", but he is not yet "modernized". Modernization can occur with developing a keen sense of social responsibilities which is what Indianization tends to prevent. For, basically, the Indian cultural attitude is other-worldly, self-centred, narcissistic and withdrawn. The temper of the Indian intellectual is intuitive and speculative rather than rational, empirical, and scientific.

Thus, whereas it is possible, though only very rarely, to come across a modern mind in the Indian society today, but it is almost impossible to come across a "modernized" man. For a "modernized" man is possible only in a fully modernized society, that is a pluralistic society, with an infrastructure affording the possibilities of variety of social roles, a self-sustaining economic system, a planned industrial network, and a liberal, free, political system

India, at present, has, to an extent, the external framework of a modernized society, but not the inner substance. This too is limited mainly to its urban centres, which still constitute very insignificant part of the country. The vast rural area is still lying in the same primitive stage as ever. As a result of this, the modernization process of the urban areas too has been more or less smothered.

This explains why Indians even in the urban areas lack what David C. McClelland has called, "the impulse to modernization", \*that is, "*n Ach*" in the technical language. The term "*n Ach*" stands for "need for Achievement" and, according to McClelland, it has been found to be the chief characteristic of the people of modernizing societies. Indians, in general, are singularly lacking in "*n Ach*", because of their cultural heritage, they look upon all achievements in this ephemeral world as not worth striving for.

A strong reason for the continuing hold of the traditional culture could be the continuation of agriculture, still conducted in the manner of the pre-industrial age, the main plank of the Indian economy. The whole of rural and suburban economy

\*See Myron Weiner (Ed) *Modernization*, Basic Books, New York, 1966,

is still agricultural and the consequent social relations and cultural outlook inevitably get extended to the urban centres through a large number of temporary migrants from the rural areas. Over 80 per cent of people in Delhi, for example, have strong social and emotional links with their villages which they visit periodically. The values of the agricultural that is, traditional society, thus overwhelm the urban life which in reality, is subject to pressure of the conditions of industrial and bureaucratic society.

By itself agricultural economy is not an obstacle to modernization of society. It can even serve as an aid to social change. But, it depends upon the mode of agricultural operation obtaining in a particular society and the relationship it maintains with the technological and industrial advancement. If the mode of cultivation is traditional the attitudes of the people are bound to remain traditional.

In India the entire agricultural operation is still wholly primitive except perhaps in some parts of the Punjab and Haryana and modernized farms in the suburban areas around big cities. In the vast stretches of rural areas from Gujarat to Assam and from Kashmir to Cape Comorin agricultural fields are tilled with bullock drawn ploughs and the spade work is done by human hands. Very little of fertilizers is used by the farmers for they do not think that artificial measures can bring about a change in the land's fertility. The whole agricultural production is still subject to natural calamities like flood, drought and pestilence.

Under these circumstances it is hardly surprising that traditional superstitious beliefs continue to have their hold on the mind of the people in the rural areas who still constitute over 80 per cent of India's total population.

On the other hand if agricultural operations were to be heavily mechanized with the latest technological equipments produced in the industrial sector the rural people are bound to develop something of the scientific outlook that is a belief that the production of agricultural commodities does not depend upon the whims of nature or the gods but upon man's own effort, skill and proper utilization of the available resources and technological devices. They will then be properly brought into the main current of the modernization process.

This has already happened in the advanced countries, where industrial and technological revolutions have contributed to the agricultural revolution. The Southern states of U.S.A., for example, are predominantly agricultural, but this has not obstructed the modernization process in them.

Ultimately modernization means a total reorientation of man's belief, outlook and attitudes. The reorientation is towards greater realization of man's own powers, towards a belief that the world can be changed for the betterment of all men through scientific and technological devices and rational ordering of the social institutions. It aims at almost the never-ending goal of creating opportunities for the fullest utilization of man's infinite faculties. That is why, the more modernized is a society, the more numerous are the roles and institutions which proliferate to offer scope for realization of man's faculties. Thus, the modernization of the external socio-political structures is meant to serve the growing intellectual and emotional needs and aspirations of the modernized man.

In ideal conditions, the modernization of both the external socio-political structures and that of the inner beliefs and attitudes of man proceed simultaneously, both affecting and modifying each other. The Western societies were fortunate in having had such ideal conditions, since they have been the home of modern scientific and technological revolutions, and, consequently, of revolutions in social, economic and political thought.

The conditions obtaining in the developing societies which have only recently become free to reconstruct themselves in the modern way, are very different. They are face to face with a dilemma, not of their own making.

Take India, for example. It cannot afford not to modernize itself. But, since modernization is an accomplished phenomenon in the West, it cannot but turn to the West for guidance and help. This is done by the political leaders in power, who must for political reasons keep denouncing the West and praising the national traditions which are basically anti-modern. Besides, in this effort of modernizing the society from top downward, the masses stand alienated at the receiving end and disinclined to participate in the modernizing process. This leads to the increasing governmental control on the

modernization process, and, finally to the menacing rise of authoritarianism and dictatorship.

On the other hand, the Third World societies could be said to be in a more fortunate situation than their European counterparts. The latter had to undergo the painful ordeal of change and its attendant sufferings for centuries. The social history of England during the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries gives ample evidence to it. English literature from Goldsmith to Galsworthy tells the story of the great price the English society had to pay for modernization in terms of human miseries. The societies of the Third World can afford to be wary of avoiding the pitfalls of the modernization process and go about it with a wisdom which could not have been available to the European societies.

## THREE

### A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Hypothetical speculations about what might have or might not have happened if the British rule had not been established firmly by the middle of the nineteenth century in India may, for all practical purposes, appear to be irrelevant. But, in an effort to understand the reality of the socio cultural attitudes of the people of what eventually became India, the speculations may help to reach somewhere near the heart of the matter

Even an awareness that there exists plenty of room for speculations, particularly in the context of the beginning of the process of "modernization", should initiate us to approach the subject without much of passionate fervour or scholarly jugglery of facts which often vitiate our view of the crux of the problem

One of the most disturbing questions that keep cropping up insistently in the mind of a keen observer of India's socio-cultural scene in the modern times is Could India have been the nation it is claimed to be today, had there been no British rule for about one and a half centuries?

Evidently, if the historical facts are to be taken into consideration and relied upon, the answer in plain words would be "No" Into how many "countries" would India have been divided, then, is futile to speculate about But, what is certain is that the India, which came into existence under the British rule and which attained political independence in 1947 would not have been there

This is a point of cardinal importance in the context of the problem of modernization of the Indian society. For, one indispensable pre condition of the success of modernization process in any society, more particularly so in a developing, traditional, society is to have a sense of national identity. Further, this sense must have grown from the aspirations and

vision of the people, from their spontaneous participation in the political social and cultural, activities, from their day to day struggle for existence and from a sense of belonging to the community life around

The emergence of a healthy nation is greatly facilitated by the existence of political sovereignty and cultural and linguistic affinities. Indeed, the two attributes of a nation, namely, political sovereignty and linguistic affinity, are of paramount importance.

History does not conclusively show that cultural affinity is also of the same importance as political and linguistic affinity. In Europe, for example, in a broad sense, the same Greek-Roman Christian culture prevails everywhere, but this has not created one nation out of whole Europe. Even when it is culturally one, it is divided into many nations, big and small, on the basis of languages and historical developments the course of which was determined by politically free people acting and reacting to changing economic and social circumstances. In course of time, each nation gradually developed nuances of cultural distinctions too. Nevertheless, they are subservient to the broader as well as deeper aspects of the European culture.

The case of the Indian sub continent has been different. It is common knowledge of history that when the European colonizers began extending their activities on the Indian soil to the political realm in the seventeenth century, they found it fairly easy to establish their political power. At that time, there were many states and many governments functioning through strife, battle reconciliation and strife again. Almost everyday the boundaries of the different states changed as a result of victory or defeat in battles or rise of rebellious factions.

India as it came to be organized under the British rule, was, thus never one political and administrative unit before. Even during the best days of the Mughal Empire, quite large chunks of the sub continent remained out of its orbit and maintained their politically independent status. As the decadence of the Empire approached many independent and sovereign states were sprawled all over the land and kept fighting with each other.

Had the Britishers left them alone to settle their political quarrels through warfare or otherwise, would they have eventually

emerged as a few viable politically independent states based upon linguistic and cultural affinities? There is no way to a satisfactory answer to the question. Perhaps, this could have happened, as it did happen, though in somewhat different circumstances, in Europe. And, if this had really happened, the story of modernization in this sub continent would have been entirely different.

At least, one difference could be easily visualized. The process of modernization would have begun at a much later date, but once begun in those hypothetically sovereign nations as a result of the voluntary will of the people, it would have been in all likelihood complete modernization of external political, economic and social institutions as well as of inner thinking and attitude to life and the world.

But, this did not happen. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Britishers became the unchallenged and unchallengeable political rulers of India. The ease with which they established their political authority is itself a revealing reflection on Indian society and culture, then, as well as, now. It was the victory of a superior, modern, outgoing, forward-looking, intellectual culture over the primitive Indian culture that laid the firm foundation of the British rule in India, which became willy-nilly the initiator of the modernization process in the Indian society.

Whatever the advantages of this historical fact, it bred one disadvantage which continues to clog the progress of modernization even today. It introduced modernization into the Indian society from the top, as a result of which the modernization process has made no impact upon the inner experience of the common people. They never willed it, never struggled or suffered for it, and never felt the need of it. They received it as a gift from their colonial masters and, therefore, from the very beginning, developed an ambivalent attitude to anything modern. If on the one hand, they felt drawn to the modern institutions being created by the colonial government, on the other, they felt repelled by them.

From the very beginning the masses developed a deep suspicion in their approach to the modern institutions, and that suspicion has not altogether vanished even today. The Indian masses continue to look upon anything modern with distrust.



This has prevented them from becoming willing partners of the British rulers or the national ruling elite in their endeavour to modernize the Indian society

Another disadvantage emanating from the long period of British rule in the context of modernization has been that, in an ironical manner, it prevented the growth of a sense of national identity for a long time to come. The way it has happened is generally looked upon as a rather inadvertent advantage accruing from the foreign rule. In an apparently superficial sense, it could, of course, be argued that for the first time in its history the entire Indian sub continent had come under one political and administrative set-up

But, it is clean forgotten, while arguing in this manner, that the credit, if any, for this goes to the astute British politicians and expert administrators rather than to the Indian people. They had been forced into a bigger political entity which they had never desired nor worked for. The Indian masses were hardly even aware of a vast country having come into being as a distinct political entity. For this newly forged country was not the fruit of their effort. It had come into being without their least involvement in the process.

and cultural affinities (not religious), it had not become one, nor could it have, so long as it remained a colony of the foreign power. If it had become a nation, all its unifying elements had been provided by the foreign rule: English language education; English administrative and judicial machinery; modern communication and transport system; and so on.

In other words, the unifying elements were the modernizing agents introduced by the British rulers. On this basis, it could reasonably be surmised that had the modernizing agents been allowed to permeate into the deeper levels of social structure and of the common man's life, the unifying process would have been strengthened and, eventually, a nation would perhaps have emerged out of the country. But this evidently was not allowed to happen, not only by the colonial government, but, ironically, also by the nationalist leaders campaigning for political independence. Nor has it been allowed to happen during the last 30 years since Independence.

That the British rulers were not interested in letting the modernizing process encompass the lives of the masses is understandable. They had introduced institutions of modern society (as they had developed in the West) into the Indian society on a selective, piecemeal basis and only to the extent that they helped strengthen the Empire in India and facilitate the functioning of the government.

For this purpose, they needed. English-educated men to help in the administration manned by the Britishers; modern transport and communications system to help the administration and increase the volume of trade and commerce run mostly by the Britishers, modern police and army to maintain internal law and order, and fight external war; and a judicial system to give legal sanctions to acts of exploitation as also to administer justice on a secular basis (in the sense of not favouring any particular religious community) in a society infested with numerous religions.

Thus, primarily, the modern institutions and systems introduced by the Britishers were intended to strengthen the roots of the Empire in India rather than to really modernize Indian society. The mutiny of 1857 had given them a clear warning against trying to dabble in the social, religious and cultural

lives of the Indian people. Thereafter, the modernizing process came to be confined to the big cities, and even in them, to the English-educated upper and middle class people.

The tale of this English educated elite is a pivotal one in the whole course of the development of modern Indian history. The rise of this class, first in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, and then in the provincial cities and towns, and the manner of its functioning, was a curious but highly significant phenomenon. The people of this class performed an ambivalent function of both promoting and at the same time hindering the modernization process in the Indian society.

English education in India from the very beginning was never intended to promote original thinking in modern disciplines. It was intended to produce English language knowing clerks, assistants, junior officers and so on to serve the administration and, thereby, become supporters of the British Empire in India.

By and large English education performed this function exceedingly well. The common, ordinary, people after getting English education were employed in government service which made them feel important and sharers in the administration. These men naturally became the close allies of the British rule, imitated their masters in dress and manner with a desire to please them, and thus became Westernized—though not modernized.

But, on more sensitive minds who had also leisure to read extensively in English creative and socio politico-philosophic literature, English education made a different impact. The more deeply they read in English and European (through English translations) socio political thought and imbibed the invigorating thoughts of Liberty, Freedom, Equality and Social Justice, the more keenly they became aware of the shortcomings of their own culture and society, and the more assiduously they endeavoured to remove them.

They too supported the British Empire in India, but it was an intelligent support for the regime and the education through which the new awakening had come. Of these people, the leading figure was Raja Rammohun Roy, whose significance we have begun to realize only now.

Rammohun Roy was the leader of the pioneering modernizers

of the Indian society, whose support for the Raj was born of full awareness of the pre-British Indian history and of the unifying impact of the British rule through the introduction of modern institutions in Indian society. The people of this category undertook to purge the Hindu society of its clogging primitive rituals and conventions so as to enable it receive and make use of modern knowledge and culture in the right spirit.

By the end of the nineteenth century, however, when a much larger number of people of the upper, aristocratic class, had gained English education and quite a few had also visited England and seen the functioning of a free nation, political demands came to be raised, first for constitutional participation in governmental affairs, and, then, in the early decades of the twentieth century, for political freedom. With the demand for political freedom and the consequent rise of the national spirit often verging on chauvinism, the process of modernization began getting diluted, diffused and stifled.

The demand for political freedom brought into operation a logic of its own which led to the apotheosis of the glories of India's cultural heritage. Ironically enough, even this knowledge of the country's past had become available to the people of different parts of India through the publications in English of the *researches made by the British and European scholars*.

A dispassionate quest of the knowledge of the past is an important characteristic of the modern attitude. The traditional scholars of India were completely devoid of the historical awareness and, therefore, of the evolutionary nature of the society. They lived, at best, in a timeless state, and at worst, in the closed world of the traditionally sanctified scriptures.

However, the new English educated intellectuals, who demanded constitutional and political reform and eventually political freedom, had come to acquire the knowledge of India's past rich culture. They now invoked the glories of the past to establish an image of the national identity—an endeavour which, though logically justified, was full of risks. For, the distant past of India was a myth which could be interpreted in diverse, often in a conflicting manner, and as a whole, was disagreeable to the recent past of about 500 years of Muslim rule.

Thus despite the *fragmentary nature of India's past*, both

recent and distant, the English educated intellectual politicians used their freshly acquired argumentative capacity to prove that despite diversity in the country's past and present India had an essential deeper, unity. Since then, one of the most imponderable burdens on our national political leaders has been to keep alive this fiction of unity in the midst of the facts of diversity.

Had the process of modernization been allowed to encompass wider and deeper aspects of the Indian society, uninhibited by the inevitable consequences of the rise of the nationalist spirit the course of the development of Indian history would have been different. This would have required bringing larger and still larger chunks of the traditional Indian society under the impact of the modernizing process. This would have meant pushing modern institutions and social systems beyond the urban areas to the semi urban rural areas and inducing the masses to participate in their working.

This also meant an endeavour to awaken them rationally, and not sentimentally, and let them become conscious of the social and political issues their leaders were fighting for. This required closer contact between the masses and their leaders. This required an appeal not to the past glories but to the future prospects.

Yet perhaps in a country like India with such an age old traditional culture any endeavour to modernize the urban semi urban and rural masses would have encountered heavy resistance which the nationalist leaders lured by the prospects of replacing the foreign rulers did not want to arouse. As time passed they grew more and more impatient to acquire full governmental powers and become the rulers of a vast country which had come into being under the British rule.

Gradually they acquired two faces the sentimental idealist nationalist for the masses and the rational modern for the Britishers. The duplicity may have paid them but it contributed substantially to the thwarting of modernization of the Indian society which resulted in the partition of the country and the rise of the activity of the divisive and disruptive forces since Independence.

education, it was felt, would make the Indians realize what good the British rule was doing to their country

Under such circumstances, anything like a Renaissance was most unlikely. What really happened was the emergence of an entirely new kind of educated class of people—the English-educated class with awareness of the existence of other cultures and civilizations beyond the bounds of their own traditional ones. These people spoke in a foreign tongue, affected foreign dress and manner, became acquainted with secular, humanistic literature of ideas of the West, developed a critical faculty and, because of these external and internal changes, gradually got alienated from their traditional religious communities.

For the first time, they began becoming aware of their own history, the consciousness of which, ironically enough, first came from books and articles written by British authors—and look upon the present with a questioning eye. They became aware of the glories of the ancient Indian culture through English education and grew eager to reform the Hindu society which they found beset with superstitions and barbaric rituals.

This was, therefore, actually *an age of reform rather than an age of Renaissance*. Of course, the inspiration for this reform came from the newly acquired faculty of reason through the English education. But, reason was the soul of Renaissance. In the case of the nineteenth century Bengali intellectuals, the scope for the functioning of this faculty was limited to religious and social reform. Since the number of the educated was negligibly small and wholly concentrated in Calcutta, and, thus were cut off from the vast masses, even their reformist movement did not make any perceptible impact upon them.

a unifying force and an instrument of training in liberal-scientific thinking and the establishment of a free, democratic, socio-economic order.

It is easy today to criticize Rammohun Roy for what he said and did and for what he did not say or did not do. The extreme. Left historians have accused him for supporting free imperial trade, which was to the advantage of the British Raj then. And, the extreme Right historians have found fault with his English education and rational-liberal approach to orthodox Hindu religion. Historians of both the extremes tend to ignore the severe limitations of the age in which he lived, and, therefore, fail to perceive the uniqueness of his achievement in having transcended them heroically.

If he does not come up to the level of Martin Luther of the European Reformation, with whom he has often been compared, it is not because he was a lesser genius, but because he was handicapped by the crippling imperatives of his times. Luther rode the crest of the Renaissance; Rammohun Roy had to rouse a hopelessly decadent society, lying dormant for centuries. Luther tried to infuse reason in a religion, that is, Christianity, which was already based a great deal upon homely common-sense and had lent itself to rational interpretations in theological literature. Rammohun Roy undertook an uphill task of introducing rational thinking in a religion—Hinduism, which had always dismissed reason as being one of man's baser faculties.

Rammohun was essentially the product of the late eighteenth century feudal, pre-capitalist, India between the final dissolution of the Mughal Empire and the beginning of the firm consolidation of the British Empire. It was a twilight age of transition from the medieval society to the modern, and he could clearly perceive in the British Raj the great possibilities of building a modern society, the alternative to which was to let the medieval ethos, with all its evils and dangers, continue.

Herein lay the reason behind Rammohun's support for the new British Empire in India, which was well on the way to making a country out of splinter states and breakaway regions ruled by whimsical autocrats. At that time, support for the British Empire meant support for a modern India, and Raja Rammohun Roy had the vision and courage to do this.

Rammohun Roy is often accused of having been a renegade to reason and turning into a religious leader. But the accusation itself is the product of failure to follow the line of the development of his ideas and to understand the compulsions of his time. There is no denying that Rammohun Roy of *Tuhfat-ul Muwahhiddin*, written in 1804, is an ardent advocate of reason in religious belief and conduct, and appears to be incongruous to the Rammohun Roy of later writings from 1815, when he finally settled in Calcutta. In these writings, he becomes a great votary of the *Vedanta* teachings as interpreted by Sankara and seems reluctant to accord to reason the same importance as before.

Yet, Rammohun Roy could never relinquish reason altogether. In fact, he applied it to the interpretation of the *Vedanta* itself as is evident from his comments in his writings after 1815 on the concepts of Monism and Maya, and his trenchant criticism of the double standard, selfish, approach of the Brahmins to the religious rituals. This led him to oppose tooth and nail *satipratha*, which was the flagrant and widespread manifestation of the anti social, anti-humanistic rituals prevailing in the Hindu society at that time.

Thus, Rammohun Roy did not reject reason in his later writings, but extended its application to the deeper social and religious issues. In other words, as has been noted by some scholar historians such as Sumit Sarkar, from being an advocate of reason as an instrument of reform from without, he turned into an advocate of reason as an instrument of reform from within. The young Rammohun of *Tuhfat* used reason to exclude and reject whatever was irrational and superstitious in the Hindu religion. The later Rammohun of the *Vedantic* writings used reason as an instrument of reform from within, to include and retain the externalities but re orientate the whole attitude from within.

It is quite plausible that Rammohun Roy reached this position through his deep study of the Christian religious literature. At one time, he was drawn so close to the Unitarian faith of Christianity, that some Unitarians of the U.K. and U.S.A. expected his conversion to the Christian faith. Unitarianism claimed to be the cosmopolitan Christian religious faith based upon the rejection of orthodox elements and a rational approach



to the Biblical myths.

Rammohun Roy naturally was drawn to it, but the thought of conversion never occurred to him. Perhaps reason showed him the futility of conversion; for any religion, shorn of falsehood, was as good as the other. Besides, the desire in him for social reform of the Hindu society was too deeply entrenched to allow him to think of conversion to Christianity. But, certainly, this showed his anxiety to give a rational basis to Hindu religion and to evolve gradually a universal religion based upon inner spiritual understanding rather than external rituals and conventions.

In a very essential sense, therefore, Rammohun Roy was the first modernizer of Hindu religion and culture. Later on, his followers in the *Brahmo Samaj*, which he had founded for the propagation of his modernized version of Hinduism, turned to be mere reformers and, naturally, had to face stiff opposition from the orthodox Hindus, and disintegrate. Rammohun's concept of *Brahmo Samaj* was a sort of universal liberal religion, based upon reason and closely linked up with the social and even economic issues.

It is here that Rammohun Roy parted company with the Westernizing movement carried under the banner of Young Bengal movement on the one hand, and the "nativist" orientalist on the other. He by his personal conduct and intellectual arguments as much resisted the British rulers' scheme of Westernizing the Bengali youth, as he resisted the narrow-minded leaders of the *Dharam Sabha* which was against any reform in the orthodox Hindu socio-cultural ethos.

In his external aspects of daily living, he was almost indistinguishable from an orthodox Hindu, but in his approach to religious practice and in his understanding of the essence of the religion, he was almost a Westerner. He tried to synthesize Eastern and Western culture, and therein lay the pioneering nature of his achievement, and the proof of his modernizing spirit. English education did not turn him into a brown sahib. Nor did *Vedantic* learning turn him into an esoteric religious preacher.

Rammohun could have been drawn to either of the two extremes like many of his contemporaries. But he used English education to broaden his intellectual horizon, to understand the

socio-political and cultural realities of his own society, and to imbibe the thoughts of the great European liberal thinkers. He read the *Vedanta* not to turn into a *Vedantist* but to know the nature of the fountainhead of Hindu culture and apply to the process of rationalization there.

In fact, Rammohun Roy was eternally in search of his own identity, and, through this, of the identity of his own society and culture, of the need of which, perhaps, his English education and reading had made him acutely conscious. This is clear from his study of Sanskrit texts and writing in Bengali, the language of the masses. For a Westernized intellectual would be disinclined to write in any other language than English. But a modernized intellectual like Raja Rammohun used his wide secular, humanistic, knowledge gained through English by writing in his own language. For the modern sensibility can evolve only by fertilizing itself through contact with the growth of the scientific humanistic knowledge in the West and expressing itself in the language of its own.

The fact that the place of English in India even today still remains unresolved provides one of the evidences how the modernization process has been allowed to drift into mere Westernization process. But even here Rammohun Roy had shown the way to the later modernizer like Gandhi who, insisted on the development of an all-India Indian language to replace English.

There are other links between Roy and Gandhi, though the latter is on record to have expressed disapproval of Roy's support for English language education and the English Raj. Whether or not Gandhi's disapproval is justified, there can be no doubt that Rammohun Roy by linking religious reform with socio-political reform had shown the way to Gandhi. He showed that it was impossible to influence the Hindu society deeply saturated with primitive, unsocial, other-worldly, religious feelings and thoughts by acting and speaking like a purely European intellectual. Religion in this society could not have been ignored, for any attempt at social reform must be made through religious reform.

As Charles Heimstath says

\* Religious reform equalled social reform. This legacy of Roy set a powerful example for reformers everywhere, many

of whom adopted the religious *samaj* form for promoting social change. Secular reformist crusaded usually for legislative social enactments or caste reform and succeeded in drawing adherents, but alterations in personal and family lives in India required revising religious beliefs and practices. Roy foresaw this connection, as Gandhi did a century later; Indians could not leave religion behind but needed its continued support—were perhaps in special need of it—when they broke community regulations and charted new courses for themselves and their families. Religious beliefs and practices, it should be stressed, were reformed, not ignored, in India's modernization.”\*

And, there lay the rub. The process of modernization had to include the religious practices, since no part of the traditional Hindu life was free from them. And such was the nature of the Hindu religious-social culture that any attempt at reform was bound to be limited to the external practices merely. It failed to affect the inner attitudes of the Hindus.

Of course, as far as Rammohun Roy was concerned, he tended to be a more thorough modernizer than the later nationalist, social and political reformer like Gandhi. He was clear that propagation of Western scientific education, support for the establishment of the modern British social and political institutions and for free trade in the Indian economy would be sorely needed to pull the Hindu society out of medieval decadence.

Rammohun is now criticised for supporting free-trade between India, the colony, and England, the country of the colonial rulers, which resulted in the destruction of Bengal's handicraft and home industries. Under the colonial political domination, such consequences were not unlikely, but, this would have been a small price for industrialization of the society on modern scale, had the British rulers established some important key industries in India too. The adverse consequences, however, bred by adverse circumstances do not invalidate the logic behind Roy's vigorous plea for free trade.

\*Charles H. Heimsath, "Rammohun Roy and Social Reform" in *Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernization in India*, Ed. V.C. Joshi, Vikas, New Delhi, 1975 p 154.

Thus, Rammohun's modernizing spirit was constantly crippled by the contradictions inherent in his age, and in the benevolent effect of the colonial rule, at least, at that time. It was a peculiar situation. On the one hand, the modernization of Hindu society was possible only by imbibing Western liberal knowledge and culture through the British rulers in India. On the other, no true spirit of modernization could flower under a colonial rule. Even the beginning of the very sense of the national identity, however vague and limited, at that time, was the product of the consolidation of the British Empire in India and the spread of English education.

To quote Sumit Sarkar:

"Rammohun's achievements as a modernizer were thus both limited and extremely ambivalent. What is involved in this estimate is not really his personal stature, which was certainly quite outstanding; the limitations were basically those of his times which marked the beginning of a transition, indeed, from pre-capitalist society, but in the direction, not of full-blooded bourgeois modernity, but of a weak and distorted caricature of the same which was all that colonial subjection permitted."\*

But it was not merely what the "colonial subjection permitted" There was something at the centre of the Hindu cultural ethos which at first resisted, and, then, distorted the process of modernization. And it is still there even today.

\*Sumit Sarkar, "Rammohun Roy and the Break with the Past", *Ibid* p. 63.

## FIVE

### GANDHI—THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO MODERNIZATION

"Tilak and Rammohun," said Gandhi 1921, "would have been far greater men if they had not had the contagion of English learning" (*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol 19, Publications Division, Government of India, Delhi 1966, p 477)

It could be said, in turn, about Gandhi himself that he would have been only a small, ordinary, man, one among the millions, had he not been 'contaminated' with English, and, above all, had he not visited England early in his life

Gandhi owes his greatness as political leader and religious reformer, to English language and England far more than Tilak and Rammohun did. It was through English education that he became aware of the vast country India had become. It was while he was in England that he came to know of the existence of such a book as the *Gita* and read it first of all in English translation

In fact, since Gandhi did not have more than rudimentary knowledge of Sanskrit, English was the medium through which he chiefly acquired the knowledge of the ancient Indian scriptures. This was, in a sense, indirectly beneficial to him. Having known certain selective portions of the scriptures through a foreign language in which much of the original resonance was bound to be lost, he could more easily afford to make them mean what he intended them to than Tilak and Rammohun Roy.

Gandhi's stricture on Tilak and Roy, therefore, is rather misplaced. It is even clear from the very act of bracketing Tilak and Roy, two minds not only belonging to two different times, separated almost by three quarters of a century, but also sharply opposed in their attitude to the British Raj. Tilak, who declared, long before Gandhi himself was clear about his

political objectives, that Independence was the birthright of the Indians, was a far cry from Rammohun Roy, who continued to regard the British rule as a divine blessing for the Indians

The explanation of the stricture could be something else. In 1921, when Gandhi made the statement, he was already a confirmed, national, political leader with charismatic powers. He was no longer the Gandhi of 1915-16, an advocate of social and constitutional reform. The experiences of the success of the Khilafat movement, which made a large number of Muslims join the Congress Party and of the Champaran indigo *Satyagraha*, brought him a realization that so long India was under the British rule, even the work of social reform could not be carried out satisfactorily. That is why Gandhi was led to strongly disapprove of Rammohun's support for the Empire in India, which Gandhi wrongly attributed to Roy's "contagion of English learning."

Again, it was not easy for Gandhi to keep in view the political and social circumstances prevailing about a century before, when Rammohun Roy had flourished in Bengal. In the last decade of the eighteenth century, when Rammohun Roy, grew up, the centre of the British rule was Bengal, and, even in Bengal, Calcutta. Outside Bengal, the Britishers had acquired political hegemony, but the social cultural impact of the Raj was concentrated in Calcutta, the headquarters of East India Company, and later, the Capital of British India until 1912.

The other two important centres of closer contact during those days between the Britishers and the natives were Madras and Bombay. But the latter two cities developed more as educational and cultural centres, in addition to their being big centres of trade and commerce.

Calcutta, however, was the centre of colonial power. It was here that crucial economic, educational and administrative matters were discussed and decided upon. And it was to this Calcutta, throbbing with life and reverberating with rapid social change as a result of the galvanizing contact with the Britishers, where Rammohun came and settled down in 1815.

The field of Rammohun Roy's activities was limited to this Calcutta, where already the process of modernization was in full force under the impact of the Britishers. Roy's India was thus limited mostly to Bengal and specifically to Calcutta. He

acted and reacted to forces operating generally in Bengal, but particularly, in Calcutta. Roy, therefore, could be said to be a reformer of the Bengali society, which was still homogeneous. He could not keep in his view the complex Indian society with wide divergence and disparity from region to region. Even when Rammohun speaks of the Indian society, he clearly means the Bengali society, particularly the Bengali Hindu society.

Gandhi's field of activity, on the other hand, from the very beginning, was not limited to any particular geographical region. By 1921, the image of the vast India, unified under one colonial rule, had got itself imprinted on the consciousness of all Indian political and intellectual leaders and social reformers—an image which could not have created itself in the mind of Rammohun Roy in the early nineteenth century.

There was yet another limitation of Rammohun's modernizing activities. The area of his operation remained confined to the upper class and upper middle class Bengali Hindu society. The lower strata of the society he ignored almost completely. About the caste-system, for example, he had nothing to say. Rammohun was an intellectual whose appeal was to the intellect of others. As a religious reformer, he interpreted the scriptures in terms of a rationalist-philosopher. This could be understood by the English-educated Calcuttans, but not by the semi-urban and rural masses. Not even by the masses in Calcutta.

Of course, he did translate some of his own commentaries on the *Upanishads* and *Vedanta* into Bengali in an endeavour to let the new knowledge seep down to the common people, but the latter were not enlightened enough to be induced to receive the import of his writings in the right spirit.

Roy was, thus, alienated from the common people and became the first of the Indian intellectual elite class which grew with the increase in English education, and from which came the great intellectual-political stalwarts of the late nineteenth century. Even as this class grew in number, the gap between it and the other educated, but less intellectualized countrymen widened enormously. This alienation of the Indian intellectual-politicians and the ordinary common people was the legacy from Roy, which determined the nature of their activities through the whole of the nineteenth century until, in fact, the

emergence of Gandhi in the beginning of the twentieth century. Not only were their ideas highly Anglicized but even their modes of action and behaviour were fashioned after those of the contemporary English intellectuals.

As Charles Heimsath has noted

"many of the 19th century leaders were proper Victorians, and their political and social advocates were better suited to English than to Indian audiences. Social reform through most of the 19th century lay in areas that affected this class: abolition of *sati*, widow remarriage, raising the age of consent and marriage, girls' education. Emphasizing individual emancipation, the reformers looked to legislation to break open the tightly guarded customs of upper caste Hindus. This meant reliance on British agencies for reform of Hindu society, a weakening and in the long run ineffective mechanism."<sup>\*</sup>

The importance of Gandhi in this context, lies in his Herculean endeavour to wrest the modern ideas from the hands of the alienated intellectuals and bring them down not only to the level of the less educated but more Westernized people, but also to the level of the half literate and illiterate tradition bound masses. He tried to break the charmed circle of Anglicized Indian intellectuals contented with constitutional reform of social evils and sought to induce the masses to take initiative on their own in modernizing their attitudes to social and political problems. No doubt Gandhi almost achieved success—but only almost. Ultimately he failed and the story of his failure is more illuminating than that of the success of many others.

The seeds of his failure now appear to be there in his socio-political plan of action from the very beginning. They are there in his personality and the manner of his rise to be the greatest political leader and modernizer of the Hindu society and culture. From these seeds grew his ideas and programme of action.

As a child Gandhi was a ruminative type, withdrawn, reticent, extremely sensitive, eager to know himself and the world around him. His academic achievements were of very ordinary

<sup>\*</sup>Charles H. Heimsath, Rammohun Roy and Social Reform. *Ibid* p. 163



level, the formal modern education being not to his taste. He went to London to study law not because he had a particular liking for the profession. It was in response to the practical need of training himself in law so that he could make a capable *Diwan* of some state. It is significant that Gandhi had no plan till then to enter politics or undertake social reform. He was to secure the degree of Bar-at-law and return to India, perhaps practise for some time, and, finally, become a *Diwan*.

Then, he went to South Africa to conduct a legal suit, not because he had earned the reputation of being an outstanding lawyer, which he never was, but because he wanted to earn money from the profession, which he knew he would not be able to do in India.

The great turn in his life came in South Africa, as is well-known. But what is not so well known is that this turn was more the consequence of personal affront suffered personally by him than of his close observation of the facts of the situation and a systematic analysis of them with a view of formulating a logical course of action.

A disinclination, or, perhaps, an inability, to study a social, political situation objectively and in relation to other situations having a bearing on it, was characteristic of Gandhi. His response to social political problems was always sentimental, and seldom rational, which is derived from the traditional cultural roots. But what distinguished him from ordinary traditional Indians was his capacity to rationalize his sentiments with seemingly sound logical arguments.

Even when he returned to India, he did not join Congress as a leader with a vision of modernized India. Had he done so, he would have been one of the many stewards of the time, a position which he would not accept. The "experiments" of South Africa had made him feel exclusive and acquire a sense of having a mission. He was eager to repeat the "experiments" on a larger vaster scale, to see what fruits they yielded.

India, it seems to us now, was waiting for a *Mahatma*. Or, rather, strictly speaking, the Congress was waiting for a *Mahatma*. By 1915, great intellectuals of the country had joined the Congress and were pressing the colonial government for administrative and constitutional reforms so as to make wider room for the participation by the natives in the affairs of

governing the country. Their strength lay in their intellectual powers sharpened and enriched by the ideas of the British liberal thinkers. They discussed the issues, argued and analyzed them in chaste English—the language of the rulers—and also dressed and behaved in a manner not wholly incomprehensible to the rulers.

These intellectual leaders could negotiate with the rulers without much difficulty; they could also speak to the educated, advanced, people of the cities, but were unable, and unwilling, to approach the masses. These intellectuals, indeed, did not feel the need of involving the masses in their programme of action which centred upon the question of sharing governmental powers. Besides, in the heart of their hearts they were convinced that the British government in India was morally bound to promote more and more of Western liberal educational and social institutions, to bring about constitutional and governmental reforms, and to provide self-rule to Indians, sooner or later. The thought of mass action did not, naturally, occur to their mind.

The entry of Gandhi on the political scene of India in the second decade of the present century, radically changed the entire situation. The news of Gandhi's "successes" had reached India before Gandhi himself did, and some of them in exaggerated forms. The methods of Gandhi's *Satyagraha* and the stories of his sufferings at the hand of white *Sahibs* seemed extremely appropriate actions for putting pressure more strongly on the British rulers in India.

The expectations of the Congress political leaders were not belied. Gandhi's notable successes in the Champaran indigo *satyagraha*, *khilafat* movement, resistance to Rowlatt Act, and the Salt *Satyagraha*—the crowning glory of Gandhi's career—seemed to have electrified the rural masses all over India. He toured the country several times, and wherever he went, people came in huge crowds to listen to him. The Indian masses were ready for action, ready to take a big leap forward in the direction of modernized society.

It was during this period—1910 to 1935 (or even 1942)—that Gandhi tried in his own way to politicize the masses of the country, which was a very gigantic, almost impossible task indeed. This task he, at least, partially accomplished not as

an intellectual modernizer but as a traditional Indian socio-religious reformer, as a saint familiar to the Indian masses

Those who argue that Gandhi had acquired the life and appearance of a saint as part of his tactics to arouse the masses of India to political action do no justice to Gandhi. Gandhi was nothing if not fiercely sincere in all his doings. There was also a logic behind them, but, unfortunately, not the logic based upon objective facts obtaining in the social situation, but the logic derived from the Hindu tradition and experiences of his personal life.

Step by step since his first South African experience, Gandhi had proceeded to the life of a saintly social reformer. Had he not gone to England, studied law, read Mill and Bentham and Ruskin, met the vegetarian, Mr Salt and Theosophist, Mrs Annie Besant, and, later, got acquainted with Thoreau and Emerson, Gandhi would in all probability have become another socio-religious reformer, or, even, another Lord Buddha. His socio-political consciousness was the gift of his English liberal education, his native make up was that of a religious Mahatma. And between the two there was a constant but unresolved conflict.

It is not to be forgotten that he entitled his autobiography as "The Story of My Experiments with Truth". All his actions were designed to be material of this experiment. Everything else—political activities, religious reforms, social service programmes, etc—was meant to serve as stages in the ceaseless process of his experiments which he undertook in the spirit of enthusiasm. His whole concern lay in the observation of the success or failure of these experiments than on the objects he was experimenting upon. The Indian people were used as the guinea pig in the personal spiritual laboratory to serve the purpose of deeply personal experiments.

True, he had an economic programme based on rural India, an educational programme in keeping with the traditional culture of the country, a religious social reform programme aimed at abolishing the caste system, and a political programme eventually aiming at complete independence for the country. But, above all, as he was never tired of repeating, he was concerned with the moral regeneration of the people of India as well as the world.

But in devising none of these programmes, Gandhi applied strictly logical thinking in the context of the existing world knowledge regarding them. His approach was sentimental as usual and as symbols to arouse emotions, his programmes served some purpose.

The *charkha* the main plank of his economic thought, did serve as an emotional symbol for the rural masses, but could hardly have been relied upon to serve the real problems of food and clothing in the Indian society. The 'basic' school embodying Gandhi's educational thought never attracted even his closest followers to send their children to it. The caste system particularly at the level of the untouchables, despite Gandhi's comparatively greater achievement in this programme was not quite abolished in his life time.

And if in the independent India the caste system has shown signs of breaking it has done so more on account of the change in social relations brought about by the introduction of structural changes in the economic, industrial and social fields under Jawaharlal Nehru's direction in the fifties.

As for Gandhi's political programme its sentimental and unrealistic nature is evident from its pathetic failure in keeping the India of his dream united. The nation that emerged at the dawn of August 15, 1947 was not Gandhi's creation. He is said to have disapproved of it, disowned it. And yet ironically enough he was hailed as the Father of the Nation.

This irony was however inherent in the contradictions of the history of India which Gandhi tried to explain away and also in the nature of the struggle for freedom. What had happened was this: the top English educated intellectuals, most of them barristers and constitutional experts in the beginning, agitated in the manner of the British intellectuals of the time for social and constitutional reforms and were inspired by visions (borrowed) of equality, freedom and liberty. They were satisfied with being associated constitutionally with the governmental process.

Then came Gandhi who joined them to experiment with truth in the Indian society. Through his activities people were aroused and to the Indian intellectual political elite, political freedom with Gandhi's help began to appear possible. The declaration for complete independence was made early in 1919.

and from then onward, the struggle intensified and reached its climax in the 'thirties and 'forties

But as the struggle reached the climax and the transfer of power began to appear as a possibility, the cracks and fissures also started appearing in the struggle which resulted in the partition. Howsoever was Gandhi disappointed, the intellectual politicians were gratified to have replaced the foreign rulers of India which, even after partition, was almost as big as Europe.

No adequate answer has yet been provided to the question Why despite the Congress being a secular political party and Gandhi having worked so assiduously for communal harmony, was India divided? Or, to this question Why the unity of India even after 30 years of independence is still threatened by divisive forces? The stock answers given to these questions relate to the deeds and misdeeds of particular individuals at particular junctures during the period of the struggle for freedom. Or, they relate to the divide and rule policy followed by the British rulers. But social history is not shaped by whims of a few individuals howsoever powerful.

One of the social phenomena responsible for the partition of India and, ever since independence, for the revival and activity of the disruptive forces in the country has been the reliance of the Congress leaders on the revival of traditional culture and thought rather than on the propagation and promotion of modern values and modern attitudes. The appeal to traditional Indian culture, mainly through Gandhi, roused the Indian masses more quickly than the inculcation of modern values and attitudes, but the exercise of patience and prolongation of the freedom struggle with a vision of modernized India would have involved the willing participation of the people in full awareness of the cause.

As it happened, Gandhi aroused the people of India for a cause which they at best only half understood. They understood Gandhi's *Ramdhun*, saintly appearance, his dress and food habits, his simplified Hindi, his talk of cow protection, his fasts, his arguments for Harijan upliftment (via the Sabar myth in the Ramayana) and so on. To these the masses responded enthusiastically.

After centuries of Muslim rule and British rule some one famed to be possessed with mysterious powers was talking

familiarly to them. What they did not understand fully was his talk of political independence, reconstruction of the Indian economy and so on. But they did not care what they did not understand, they followed Gandhi wherever he went and did blindly whatever he asked them to do. Gandhi was to them more than Mahatma. he was the *avatar* (incarnation) of God born to destroy the demons of the British rulers.

But India's tradition, at least, the recent tradition also contained the Muslims, who seemed to be out of place in Gandhi's rigid Hindu style of living, arguments for cow protection and so on. Naturally, they, who had ruled India, or whatever was India then, for centuries, felt suspicious and hurt. It was this background which assured the success of the Britishers' divide-and-rule strategy.

Had the Congress leaders, instead, undertaken the task of going to the grass-roots of Indian social life, educated the people politically with modern ideas, built up the party on modernized structural framework and so on, the task of social reconstruction would not have been so baffling as it has been since independence.

Gandhi's approach to modernization was, in the final analysis, traditional. Of course, the very assumption that Gandhi consciously aimed at modernization of the Hindu society is questionable. Indeed, his opposition to the vital features of the modern society such as, large-scale industries, urbanization, reliance on technology, use of machine in everyday life, high-level scientific research, modern medicine, modern education and so on is so well known as to be common knowledge. In the face of this knowledge, it is impossible to attribute to Gandhi any consciously formulated idea of modernization.

Consciously and directly he was a social reformer. Even political independence, in his view, was subordinate to social reform which was his foremost concern. For years, he used to retire from politics, but never from his programme of social reform. But some of the characteristic features of his social programme were of modernizing nature irrespective of his declared intentions. His programme of Harijan upliftment, for example, is of cardinal importance from this point of view. It laid the basis for the serious weakening of the caste-system, the most deeply entrenched unmodernizing aspect of the

traditional Hindu society even today. Again as a reformer, he weaned a large section of Hindus away from their belief in religious superstitions and prepared them to think rationally of religious matters. Also, he talked to the Hindus about the "dignity of labour" and "dignity of man", emphasized the significance of social work and social responsibilities and made them aware, at least vaguely, of the need of freedom.

But these modernizing aspects were the indirect product of his consciously planned social reform objectives. That is why Gandhi did not attempt to build modern institutional structures to support his socio-religious reform. He accepted in fact the salient aspects of the structures of the traditional Hindu society, and attempted to modify a few others. His method was the tried *modus operandi* of all traditional Hindu reformers to reform the society by setting his own personal example of an ideal man. This is because, fundamentally speaking, he aimed at reforming the people in the society, and not the institutional structures of the society, and this could best have been done by setting personal example as an ideal figure, as the guru, the *Mahatma*. Thereby he not only deflected the process of modernization, but introduced a dangerous trend even in the nationalist movement which ignored the need of devising strong institutional structures and came to rely more and more on the reform of individuals. Here were laid the seeds of discord and disruption, of hypocrisy and pretence, and of authoritarianism and tyranny in the post-independent India.

## SIX

### NEHRU, THE MODERNIZER HIS SUCCESS AND FAILURE

One of the many inexplicable acts of Gandhi was his choice of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru as his political heir. Between them there were more striking dissimilarities than similarities, which Gandhi could not be expected to have missed. Both in matters of personal life style and those relating to current socio-political problems, they were, in fact sharply opposed. Indeed, it was a relationship born of the coming together of opposites, and, therefore, more abiding and exciting for both.

This is very nearly also the characteristic relationship between the *guru* (teacher) and *shishya* (disciple) in the traditional Hindu society. Gandhi had all the political leaders as his disciples in the 'forties, but Nehru happened to be far his most favourite. Nehru had bubbling enthusiasm. Nehru came from a high caste Brahmin family, which was also known to be fabulously rich.

Nehru had renounced his fabulously rich inheritance and dedicated himself wholly to the freedom struggle. Nehru always remained faithful and staunchly obedient to his *guru*. Howsoever he fretted at times and came near to the defiance of his *guru*, but, at the end, he always submitted. These attributes were enough to propitiate the heart of Gandhi and he chose Nehru as his political heir.

Gandhi was certainly, aware of Nehru's Western inclinations of his attraction towards British Socialist and Marxist thoughts, and of his impatience to get things done. But Gandhi expected that the hard life of the freedom struggle, still closer contact with the common people, and responsibilities of administration (in the event of attaining Independence) would mellow Nehru further and make him see more clearly the validity of his *guru's* standpoint. Besides, Gandhi expect



In the field of scientific research, big research laboratories and research institutes with modern facilities were established in the metropolitan cities and scientists of proven competence were invited to join. Facilities for more intensive research were provided in the universities and big industrial houses were induced to divert their resources for research development programmes.

Technical education too, was given strong impetus with the establishment of national Indian Institutes of Technology and Regional Institutes of Technology.

The new economic policy provided a big boost to the industrial expansion. Several big and heavy industries came up, led by the four huge most modernized steel factories in the public sector established at Bhilai, Rourkela, Durgapur and Bokaro each a monument of international cooperation. India was fast taking its place in the international economic community.

In education the period was marked by wide diversification of courses of study, introduction of modern subjects, establishment of a number of general, technical and agricultural universities and opening of infinitely large number of secondary and primary schools extending to the far flung tradition bound rural areas.

Agriculture was sought to be modernized in a big way. Foundations of tractor and fertilizer factories were laid with a view to promoting scientific farming in the rural areas. Experiments started on the search for new varieties of improved seeds. Big and small irrigation projects were prepared to face the onslaughts of nature's vagaries, such as drought and flood. Huge dams and river valley projects ranking among the world's greatest such as Kosi Dam, Bhakhra Nangal Dam and Damodar Valley River Project were completed in record time which added tens of thousands of acres to the total acreage of India's cultivable land.

The entire rural area of the country, among the world's poorest areas and wholly tradition bound, was brought under the ambitious Community Development Programme, which aimed at persuading the rural cultivators to take to scientific farming and rational approach to socio economic problems.

The whole country was divided into several Community Development zones, each of them further divided into Development

**Blocks** Under each Development Block was placed a specified number of village, and in each village was placed a Village Level Workers (VLW) who was to serve as a link between the village and the Block. Thus was forged a link between the village and the highest agricultural planning and research centre through the Development Block and the Development Zone. Under this plan, each village was obliged to have an elected Panchayat with a *Mukhia* as the Head of the Panchayat.

All these structural changes in the rural life were designed as instruments to initiate the villagers into modernization process. These, it was believed by the social scientists, would severely weaken their traditional attitudes linked with the unchanging modes of cultivation, dependence on the vagaries of nature, superstitious beliefs and rituals. Modern medicine, modern education, modern scientific cultivation, modern ways of living and so on were brought to the door-step of almost every villager's house.

Thus, Nehru endeavoured to ramify, widen and deepen the process of modernization initiated by the British colonial rule. That is why he zealously guarded all the social, political, economic, educational and other institutions bequeathed by the British ruler, and tried to extend and enrich them further or modify them wherever necessary.

Here, Nehru's break with the Gandhian way is very clear. Gandhi was basically a social reformer, Nehru, a social modernizer. Nehru did not believe that any substantial change can occur in society by reforming individuals, by trying to change their hearts, through setting personal examples. At least, such changes could occur individually, not on a wide, social scale. Imbued with a scientific, secular spirit, Nehru believed in the change of the individuals through institutional changes in the society.

At every level of social activity, therefore, he tried to introduce democratic, scientific, systematic, principles of collective functioning. No decision in any section of the society, from the highest governmental to the lowest village Panchayat level, was to be taken by one single individual, however powerful, traditionally or otherwise. All issues must be discussed and debated openly before definite decisions could be arrived at. And the discussion and debate must be carried on with reference to the

established laws of the land, which must be held as supreme and to which even the Prime Minister and the President of the country must submit

All this was something new, which had never happened in the Hindu society before. There had been reformers who sang prayers to Rama and Krishna, offered religious preachings, criticized deviations from the ways prescribed by the scriptures and the traditions, lived like *rishis* or mendicants and practised what they preached. Gandhi was thus a familiar figure to them. They did not mind his Christian and Muslim prayers, so long as he chanted *Ramdhun* and other Hindu prayers. They listened to him because he talked of *atma*, *paramatma*, *satya*, *ahimsa*, etc., which were familiar to them. And once they accepted Gandhi as the *Mahatma*, they followed Gandhi blindly unquestioningly, as they had followed other *gurus* and other *mahatmas*.

Nehru's language and style of functioning was almost incomprehensible to them, but they still flocked to hear him because they knew that Nehru was the closest disciple of Gandhi. When Nehru became the Prime Minister, they developed an other kind of attitude to him. Unconsciously they looked upon him as a king, as an exclusive national hero, the favourite of Gandhi—and therefore, of the gods, nay, sometimes, as a god himself—one who had given up everything, and yet was the richest and the most powerful of all.

As for Nehru himself, he was hardly aware of these attitudes of the Hindus as also others. During the 'fifties, he was too deeply preoccupied with establishing new modern traditions of institutional functioning to have time to analyze the people's response. For, he was convinced, once the institutions started functioning properly, attitudinal changes in the people would automatically occur.

So Nehru went ahead with his modernizing programmes. He promoted the expansion of the radio and the Press on an immensely wide scale. Industrialization was pushed further on, to penetrate even the rural areas. Communications, as well as transport systems, expanded rapidly not only on the national but also at the international level.

Telephones and motor cars ceased to be things of curiosity to most of the rural folk of the country. Even fashions started

attracting village girls and boys. Most of them craved for higher education to be able to get jobs in the towns and live there. The traditional joint family system started breaking more rapidly than ever before. Migration to towns and cities became a common feature all over the country.

Laws were enacted by the Parliament, at Nehru's initiative, governing marriage and family life on the basis of modern values, such as the freedom of the individual from any traditional customs and rituals. Court marriage, divorce, etc., were made legally valid under proper conditions.

Another feature of the modernized society, that is, urbanization, was also taken up by Nehru in great earnestness. *Chandigarh* stands as the monument of Nehru's idea of urbanization on the most modern design. Old cities were refurbished and cleaned and a number of new towns were built, particularly around new industrial establishments, big and small.

Thus, a whole process of modernization was initiated in the various segments of the Indian society. In a decade or two, it was expected, the fruits of modernization would begin to be perceptible. The whole world was watching this gigantic modernization experiment and observing its progress in relation to the progress made in China under Mao's dictatorial rule. Democracy itself seemed to have been put to test—democracy as a system providing proper inducement to social change in the newly emerged countries of Asia and Africa.

The Indian experiment as conducted under the over-all guidance of Jawaharlal Nehru provides no specific and definite answer to the question whether democracy or dictatorship provides more helpful political system for social change. The failure of modernization in India or the stalling of the process, whatever term we may use, had not been caused by the "faults" of the democratic system. The "faults" lay in the character of the traditional Hindu culture, the roots of which rest, in the unfathomable depths of the entire Indian psyche. And, this character may ultimately be seen as being also responsible for the improper functioning of the democratic system in India.

Perhaps, in respect of one thing, Nehru could be held responsible for harming the healthy growth of democracy in India. He did not evolve a proper machinery for involving the people of India in the proper democratic functioning and

social reconstruction work. He introduced the modern institutional structures and expected that people would come forward by themselves to participate in their functioning. He mistook the enthusiasm of the crowds, who flocked to listen to his speeches, for their enthusiasm for participation in the democratic and modernizing process.

In this respect, Nehru betrayed an ignorance of the real nature of the Indian people whom Gandhi had understood so well. Since he himself had become thoroughly Westernized and modernized, he could not estimate the depth of the hold of the Hindu culture on their mind which made them indifferent to socio-political activities and turned them at best into passive participants. They acted either under pressure or under temptation of material gains. Because of this, naturally they never acted in the right spirit, nor gave their best to the socio-political activities.\*

A further encouragement came to this characteristic of the Hindu people, at least partly, from Nehru's total dependence upon modernizing from the top. That is to say, invariably, programmes of social reconstruction used to originate at the top governmental level and, then, descend through a series of democratic channels to the village level, where they were meant to be implemented.

Almost invariably, they involved public expenditure on payment for the work of social reconstruction done, like building village roads, sinking tube wells, erecting cottages to house village schools, and so forth. Ordinarily, in any society, this system of work against payment should have induced more people to more work. But in the Hindu-dominated society this system, paradoxically enough, bred hypocrisy.

Basically 'contemptuous of having to work, the people invented ways of receiving payment from the government for no work done. All got involved in this big national racket of making money without working for it from the high, administrative, executive authorities down to the V.L.W. It became easier because the people at the lower level—at the village level—had no say in the formulation of policies and programmes. In theory, they were meant to be indirectly involved in the process

\* See the chapters on Familism and Work in Part Two of this book.

of programme formulations

For example, the V L W was expected to carry the villagers' views on certain topics concerning them to the Block Development Officer (B D O), and the B D O to the District Collector and so on to the highest level of the Government. But the V.L.W. never did his job, and the B D O always cooked up materials for his report to be sent up. Thus, paper work started was substituted for actual work. Consequently, life in the villages essentially remained unchanged.

What had really come to happen was this: the traditional Indian villagers had struck a compromise with the modern agents of social change. They accepted the form passively but corrupted its substance actively. Since people acting as agents all over the country were the products of the same Hindu culture, the corruption of substance of the modern institutions contaminated all segments of the post-independent Indian society, both rural and urban, though in different proportions.

Corruption was found to be more rampant in the towns and cities rather than in the rural areas not because the urban people were by nature more corrupt than the rural folks but because there were infinitely larger number of forms of modern institutions present in the urban society and the Hindu dominated people were consequently engaged on a larger scale in making the same compromise of passively accepting the forms and corrupting their substance.

Perhaps, the growth of this strange phenomenon, exclusive to the Indian society, would have been prevented had Nehru known the Hindu character of modern India. He would, then, have realized that the method of foisting modern institutions on the Hindu society would not lead to its real modernization. In fact, quite many of these modern institutions had already been in existence from the colonial period without affecting substantially the modernizing tendencies in the Indian society. What would have made a tremendous difference was the genuine involvement of the people at all levels in the socio-economic reconstruction work, their willing participation.

This willing participation of the people in a poor and backward society comes primarily through identification with the leader. The Indian people could easily identify themselves with Gandhi, but never with Nehru. Gandhi lived like them, ate like

them, travelled like them, and spoke like them. He was one of them—yet born with the spirit of God. They looked upon Gandhi with affection, familiarity, awe, respect and reverence.

Nehru, on the other hand, appeared to them kingly, unfamiliar, masterly, learned and all that. He was the *sarkar*, *malik*, ruler, one who had replaced the British masters. A very big gap yawned between him and the people.

After achieving Independence, Nehru did nothing to come closer to the people or draw them closer to himself. He never realized that in the Indian society, dominated by Hindu cultural ethos, this could be accomplished only on the strength of setting personal example. It was certainly not necessary to start dressing like a *yogi* and living in an *ashram*. Nevertheless there was plenty of room for simplification everywhere from the style of his personal living to that of the functioning of the government and its agencies.

It is true that the democratic form of functioning is necessarily expensive as also dilatory. But was it necessary for democracy for the Prime Minister to live at the Teen Murti House, the residence of the former British Commander in Chief? Or, for the President to live in the erstwhile Viceroy's Palace, with all the regal pomp and rituals intact? Or, again, for the Ministers to live in the palatial houses, previously occupied by the British rulers?

By maintaining all these imperial paraphernalia under changed names only helped in alienating him and his government further from the people. Democracy would still have worked, and to much better effect had the President, the Prime Minister and the Ministers accepted to live in more modest circumstances and in closer and in more open contact with the people.

In fact it could be argued with considerable force of logic that Nehru was more a Westernizer than a Modernizer. By retaining the Western social and political conventions of the British days he fostered the Western rather modern values. And the Western values do not become modern until they are modified in accordance with the geographical, social and spiritual needs of a particular society. Even in the West the modernity of one society, say of France, is not the same of another society say of England. Each modernized society is distinct from the other modernized society, even if the same institutions operate in all of them.

## SEVEN

### INDIAN ACADEMIC INTELLECTUALS AND THE EMERGENCY

In Europe and America there have been times of crisis when the intellectuals actively protested and fought against the cherished values of individual liberty and intellectual freedom. In the 'thirties in Spain, poets, novelists and teachers took up arms against the dictatorial Franco regime. In France, the intellectuals gave hell to the German occupation army in the early 'forties. In America, the contribution of the intellectuals in bringing about the end of the Vietnam war finally has been recognizably substantial.

The situation created by the clamping of Internal Emergency in India on June 26, 1977 by Mrs. Indira Gandhi was comparable to the calamitous times in Europe and America. In fact, it was much worse, more sinister in design, more affronting to human dignity, and more menacing to the peace of the world.

Yet what was surprising was that, barring negligible exceptions the Indian intellectuals, far from protesting and courting arrest, became by and large, almost collaborators of the tyrannical rule. Strangely enough this was truer of the intellectuals in the universities and colleges where the preservation of freedom of thought is of paramount importance the curb on which should have enraged them to fight for it.

Why did not the academic intellectuals in general, at least choose to raise the voice of protest and suffer for a cause which they profess to serve, let alone actively fight for it? The answer to this question lies in the kind of character the Indian intellectuals have come to acquire through the historical process. The focus of the present essay is on the academic intellectuals though the findings may be applicable to non academic intellectuals also. Towards the end, a brief account of the happenings



in Delhi University during the Emergency provides illustrations in support of the character analysis

The Indian academic intellectual as he is today is the product of the English liberal education, introduced by the British rulers and continuing since then. No doubt, there have also been eminent intellectuals in the age old Sanskrit educational tradition prevalent in some parts of the country even today.

But, between the traditional academic intellectual and the modern academic intellectual in India, there is a vast difference as regards the very objective of education. So much so, the traditional intellectual would hardly deserve to be called "intellectual" from the accepted standpoint of modern education.

The traditional intellectual regards education as revelation of the ultimate truth which is enshrined in the ancient texts, total obedience to which is the only way to knowledge. His job is merely to help his students memorize them and interpret some parts of the next, but his interpretation must never be questioned by his student. He is the *guru* and his *shishya* must revere him as the embodiment of godly wisdom.

The *shishya* cannot acquire it by arguing with his *guru* but by serving him in various non academic ways, such as cooking for him, keeping his house, massaging his body, washing his clothes, cultivating his garden and so on. The *guru* would observe no fixed hours of teaching, nor would charge regular monthly fees from his *shishyas*. Everything depended upon the *guru's* will and pleasure, and a good *shishya* submitted himself wholly with total devotion (*bhakti*) to his *guru* to placate him to part with his knowledge.

It is, thus, evident that the traditional academic intellectual may be called "academic", but not an "intellectual", who is characterized by a spirit of free, rational, inquiry into the nature of things and ideas, and a forward looking vision.

But—and here lies the root of the problem—the modern, academic intellectual in India has continued, and is still, by and large, continuing to work consciously or unconsciously under the deep influence of the traditional academic culture. Consequently, the modernity of the Indian intellectual is only skin-deep. He has acquired modern knowledge—mostly textual—largely under compulsion to get a job or to get into a business.

The situation, no doubt, changed with more English educated Indians visiting England and other European countries, but, by and large, it remained true of most of them. Indeed, it is true of most of them even today.

What has happened is a unique phenomenon among the newly emerged nations of Asia and Africa. The traditional culture in India, one of the oldest and richest cultures in the world, is still a living culture and exercises complete control over the minds of the Indians, and this has proved to be a big hurdle in the way of their responding deeply to the meaning of modern knowledge. Modern education and modern knowledge they regard as things of practical use: they can get jobs, contribute money to the family, and so on. But the values to which they still hold fast emotionally and spiritually are wholly traditional, and these determine their joys and sorrows, their meaning and purpose of living.

At this point, the distinction between the political, social, and other intellectuals on the one hand and the academic intellectuals on the other, must be remembered. Most of India's great national leaders of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century were those who came from rich upper class families and had glimpses, though somewhat distorted, of the Western society through their close contact with the Britishers in India or who had visited England and gained first-hand knowledge of the Western society. They were inspired not so much by reading Western books as by the living experience of actual contacts with the Britishers and British society.

This privilege has been available to a few Indian academic intellectuals, and they have certainly been more open-minded and receptive to modern knowledge. In general, the educational service in India has attracted only second-rate minds, the first rate preferring government jobs and, more recently, executive-level jobs in the big business houses. Again, about 95 per cent of those joining the academic cadre at colleges and universities comes from middle-class homes, where traditional faiths and values are wholly and unquestioningly subscribed to. They take up the work of teaching and even research not so much in response to a personal urge to gain knowledge or contribute to it, but for the purpose of merely earning their livelihood.

It is here that the Western academic intellectuals have an

advantage over their Indian counterparts. The former live in a society where all modern knowledge has been, and, is being produced. And it is living knowledge, growing and developing constantly through being put into everyday use in the functioning of the various organs of the society. The knowledge imparted in the classroom is the reality outside in the social life. Higher education, thus, is integral to the growth and development of the Western society.

The situation in India in this respect is peculiar. There is hardly any relation between the knowledge contained in the prescribed books and the social, economic and political reality of actual living. The very moral assumptions are strikingly different. The academicians here teach modern knowledge without themselves having ever seen, let alone having ever lived in the modern world and observe the way it functions.

Consequently the knowledge that they impart is not quite intimate and real even to most of them. It does not touch them or excite their intellectual curiosity. It is therefore not surprising that the hold of age old culture on their minds continues unabated which determines their general attitude of unconcern to the essential academic problems and indifference to their academic responsibilities.

A close observation of the condition of the Indian academic intellectuals leads one inevitably to the conclusion that modern education alone cannot be an adequate instrument of social change in a predominantly traditional society with a rich cultural heritage.

This also explains, I hope, some of the characteristic features of the Indian academic intellectuals: lack of will power, mechanical learning, garrulity, timidity, laziness, politicking, smugness and arrogance.

All these features are inherent in their culture which determines their outlook and attitudes and also the course of their action. Potentially the Indian academic intellectuals are as much capable of good work as those in the Western society but they are pathetically crippled by an extremely tenacious and subtle hold of their traditional culture not only on their own minds but on all aspects of social life around them.

It has often been noticed that the same college and university teachers who have been indifferent to studies and

research at home do excellent work when they go to England or America. They are able to achieve good results because, during the period of their stay, the inhibitive hold of the traditional culture on their mind is considerably relaxed and they are in close contact with a fully developed modern society, where modern knowledge is a living everyday reality. It is also significant that quite a fair number of those who marry into the Western society develop more readily a natural urge to work and a desire to excel.

On the other hand, 99 out of a 100, who return to India soon get back into the same rut as before. This evidently happens because the society to which they return is still wholly traditional in its essential spheres. Its institutions of social and family life, for example, are the same as they were 3000-4000 years ago. The values it upholds and the attitudes it promotes are almost primitive in character. They are back in the prison house of their traditional culture, and, after a period of discomfort, get used to the ways once again and feel even happy with a sense of superiority, security and promise of promotion to the top.

Nothing is prized so much among the Indian academic intellectuals as a "foreign" research degree. Having obtained one, and having the "right" connections and a minimum capacity for manoeuvring, a lecturer can legitimately push his way through to professorship and, even, vice chancellorship. On the basis of just one foreign degree, he is deemed eligible for highest jobs also in the government agencies, adviser to some Union Ministry, directorship of "advanced research" institute and so on.

In this promotional scheme there can obviously be no room for real merit. The degree, particularly the foreign degree, is all, though even this must sometimes be made subservient to "connections" and "sources", factionalism or even the pure whims of persons in power, namely, various Heads of the University Departments, Deans of Faculties, Vice chancellors and the Ministers.

Now, all this is in complete accord with the traits of Indian culture. The emphasis on the degree is determined by the traditional religious insistence on observing certain prescribed external features in appearance and dress and performance of

certain exhibitionistic rituals. This is true of both the Hindus and Muslims, but certainly much more in the case of the former. A good traditional Hindu even today is one who puts *chandan* on his head, grows a pigtail, wears *dhoti*, goes daily to temples, takes vegetarian meals and so on.

The academic intellectual has by and large dispensed with external religio-cultural features, but, consciously or unconsciously the attitudes behind them continue to govern their idea of the desirable and the undesirable, of happiness and unhappiness, of the proper and the improper, and determine their choice and course of action.

This explains their attitude to a foreign degree holder. That a Ph.D. from a foreign university may not necessarily be a better teacher or even a scholar than the other who has done substantial work independently or has the capacity to do so, is immaterial to them. The former has the external sign of being a *brahmin* with sacred thread and pigtail of the modern educational system

However, even a foreign Ph.D. is ignored by a Head of the Department or a Vice-Chancellor to bestow favour on some one else with no requisite qualifications, the Indian academic intellectual accepts it with characteristic rationalization. The authorities must not be questioned about how they act. That would amount to indiscipline and insubordination. Secondly, they concede that the preferred person has been fortunate and "earned" the promotion by placating both the gods above and the god-favoured on the earth

*The academic intellectuals in India are never concerned, like the traditional Hindus, with the idea of justice or injustice in the social system. Everything is fair in their sole concern for self-preservation and self-promotion. This makes them lusty for power in any sphere of social life, including the academic, for once in power, they can manipulate things more effectively and with complete immunity in their own self-interest. Those out of power always clamour for it at the foot of the ladder, waiting for their own opportunity to do to others what those at the top have done to them. So the game goes on.*

And, a few who are averse to clamouring for power either grow totally indifferent to the system of education or deviate into cheap romantic political ideologies. The result is a huge

wastage of vast and potentially rich intellectual resources, not to speak of the scarce material resources.

It must be reiterated that modern economic and social changes must accompany the modern educational system adopted at the college and university level. In fact, in the ideal situation, the former must precede the latter; but in the present situation prevailing in India, synchronization of the developmental process in the two spheres is the only way to make higher education meaningful and fruitful, as also to make the modern economic structure in the Indian society stable and self propelling.

Unfortunately, the need for such a co-ordinated and concerted modernization at all levels of the society is not always fully realized. As a matter of fact, the stress is now laid quite often not on modernizing the educational system but on Indianizing it, and not on modernizing the Indian society but retaining its "valuable" traditional character.

Both are part of political gimmicks, for any attempt at reviving traditional ways in socio politico economic structure and educational pattern is no longer possible without risking the entire solidarity of the national life. But even as political gimmicks, they tend to confuse the issues and blur the goals to be achieved.

It is in this context that the conduct of the academic intellectuals during the period of the Emergency clamped on June 26, 1975, must be viewed. For what the intellectuals in general did or preferred not to do has direct links with their still being willing or unwilling prisoners of their traditional culture and to that extent, being inherently inadequate as teachers of modern knowledge.

It is well to remember that the main target of attack by the dictatorial clique led by the former Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, were the Intellectuals, journalists, writers, lawyers and college and university teachers. There were good reasons behind this well calculated attack. The total curbs on democratic freedoms were thought to directly hit the intellectuals more than the masses, rural, semi-urban or urban. The dictatorial regime understandably expected something like a revolt of the intellectuals.

So, at the beginning of the Emergency, indiscriminate

repressive measures were undertaken mass arrests, torture of prisoners, posting of armed police at every corner of the campus, and so on. A reign of terror was let loose, and the intellectuals of all brands were deeply smitten by it.

But as time passed, the authorities chuckled as they realized that the intellectuals after all were no different from the non-intellectuals, and that they had over-acted in enforcing their repressive measures. In fact they found it surprisingly easy to manage the academic intellectuals. Soon, the latter in one sense or the other became collaborators in the dictatorial regime, some by lending enthusiastic support, others by observing cowardly silence.

This woeful tale of the Indian academic intellectuals during the Emergency happened to be enacted at the Delhi University campus more pathetically than elsewhere including even the two other universities in Delhi: Jamia Millia Islamia and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU).

The first part of the tale is concerned with indiscriminate midnight arrests from the homes of the academicians. Among them were two principals of colleges, two or three university professors, about two dozen readers and 200 or more college lecturers. Significantly, the number of students and *karamcharis* of the colleges and the university was far less than the teachers.

In almost all cases, entirely fictitious charges were invented. Quite a few were charged with having some kind of ties with R S S 10-15 years ago. A college lecturer was said to have been arrested for having distributed sweets after the now historical Allahabad High Court's verdict against Mrs. Gandhi on June 12, 1975. A Professor of Sanskrit was arrested because he had composed a song in Sanskrit in praise of Guru Golwalkar about a year earlier.

The indiscriminate arrest on a large scale was part of a plan to terrorize the teaching community into total submission to the Dictatorial regime. It also included placing plain-clothed police and C I D men at the bus stops, in the staff rooms and even the class rooms. A hushed silence used to prevail everywhere. Excepting for exchanging courtesies, teachers chose to be mute at the college for fear of being overheard and their innocent comments being misrepresented by the C I D men lurking around.

The plan of terrorization worked well. By the end of 1975, the entire Delhi University academic intellectuals had surrendered abjectly to the regime. This was followed by a plan of taming the intellectuals with all kinds of temptations. Soon the scramble for pelf and power became the preoccupation of Delhi intellectuals.

Quite a number of those arrested tendered unqualified apology and a firm undertaking to support Mrs Gandhi's policies and they were released on bail. While a few were frightened into utter silence, some of them became loud supporters of the authoritarian regime of Mrs Gandhi.

A typical example of this case is provided by a Professor of Sanskrit who after coming out of the prison started composing an epic poem in Sanskrit called *Indira charitam* in order to prove his loyalty to the dictator and thereby gain favours in terms of monetary prizes and awards.

This was the time when a national organization of college and university teachers was created by the Congress called National Forum of Teachers (NFT). About 1,500 teachers of Delhi University alone joined NFT. Its office bearers suddenly emerged as super bosses to whom not only the college principals and university heads of the departments paid obeisance but even the Vice-chancellor on occasions chose to be subservient to them.

It was the job of the NFT members to frighten, albeit in an apparently friendly manner, other teachers to pay homage to the regime and create the impression that the Emergency was the best of things that could happen to India. Enormous funds were placed at their disposal to arrange cheap, often vulgar, entertainment shows in a bid to totally depoliticise the whole academic community and condition its mind into thinking that Mrs Gandhi was the saviour of the nation.

They organized seminars, symposia and discussions on 20 Point, and 5 Point Programmes only to prove that in these points alone lay the salvation of the country. They arranged in addition wrestling competitions, yoga classes and film star nites and worked sedulously from selling tickets to collecting them at the gates themselves.

The otherwise powerful Delhi University Teachers Association (DUTA) itself was reduced to a ludicrous plight. With



its President and two members of its Executive Committee in jail, and election suspended, it became something like a circus arena with only jokers fooling about—each one shouting louder and performing strange antics to placate the bosses ranging from Mrs Gandhi and Mr Sanjay Gandhi to the Vice Chancellor. At least three jokers claimed to be the President of DUTA, and each one vied with the others in proving his mettle to the Vice Chancellor, who amused himself by favouring each one by turn.

This ludicrously sordid drama went on during the whole of the Emergency period. Quite a big majority of teachers did not participate in it but were waiting for the opportunity to join in. A few others gave vent to their anger in private conversation but dared not open their mouth in public. No one protested against the manace, no one struggled against it. Evidently because no one perceived clearly the nature of the menace.

No one felt the need for fighting for individual liberty and freedom of thought. These values are still essentially foreign to the Indian intellectuals for, both emotionally as well as intellectually, they are still bogged down in the quagmire of the traditional Indian culture.

This has been very clear from what has been happening in the institutions of higher learning and research since Independence. The Emergency only highlighted the well known symptoms. And the way things have started happening since the lifting of the Emergency gives no evidence that the academic intellectuals have realized the need for protecting the values of individual liberty and freedom of thought.

## EIGHT

### HINDU FAMILISM AND MODERN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

"Familism", as a term in modern sociology, is not yet quite familiar to many of us here in India. Generally, we use and discuss such sociological concepts as "urbanization", "modernization", "traditionalism", "primitivism", and so on. But it is very rare that even specialists in sociological studies in this country have dwelt upon the term, *familism*, in relation to the Indian, particularly, Hindu society.

One of the reasons for ignoring an in-depth study of this aspect of Hindu society could be a generous acceptance that Hindu society is no longer in its primitive stage, of which familism is an inalienable characteristic. A second reason could be too much of familiarity with the problem, too much of nearness to it, which blurs the perspective required for any objective and scientific investigation.

Nevertheless, not very infrequently, the term, or variations on the term, familism, have found mention as constituting one of the dangers threatening democracy in the country. There is little doubt that family favouritism or *bhai bhatijabad*, as it has been called in Hindustani, has been rampant in our socio-political life since Independence. In fact, if we try to look beneath the surface we shall find that familism has been the root of corruption and nepotism.

And yet, on social-cultural level, familism in India is not only held in high esteem: it provides the only solid value for which man must live. This accounts for, at least partly, the continuance of corruption despite stringent laws to curb it. For, those in charge of the enforcement of laws, are themselves the victim of familism, and are in sympathy with the culprits who have become corrupt for the sake of their wives and children, sisters and brothers, father and mother and so on.

After all, so the argument goes, why does a man live and learn if not to serve his parents and ensure the future prosperity of their sons and daughters? So, the man earns right and left to fulfil as richly as he can his obligations to the members of his family, which, ultimately, for him is fulfilling all his life's obligations. Generally, the measure of his love for the members of his family is the amount of money—how it is earned—is beside the point—he has spent on supporting his old and ailing parents, buying land or building houses for his children, getting them married into rich families and celebrating the social and religious rituals.

What is even of greater significance and relevance to our discussion here is that familism in the Hindu social culture is also commensurate with the concept of ultimate goodness. A good man in Hindu society is he who exists wholly and solely for the members of his family. Even when the joint family system is disintegrating under the economic pressure of industrialization and the modernizing process, the traditional concept of a good man still has its complete hold on the Hindus.

The family now may be smaller consisting mainly of wife and children, but a good Hindu continues to earn for them and live for them. If he, in addition, gives financial allowances to his parents, meets the expenses incurred on his own or *cousin-sister's* marriage, and so on, he is held unquestionable as the *Ideal Man* in not only his rural but also urban social circles. No wonder this *Ideal Man* is the perennial hero of Hindu literature as also of the most popular Hindi commercial films.

This being so, illegal and corrupt practices emanating from familism are looked upon by people in general with deep though secret sympathy and judged in the court of law with great compassion. Familism is equated with humanism. It is only human for a father or mother in high position to so manoeuvre the affairs that his or her son or daughter reaches the same position with the least difficulty.

Merit or no merit, an IAS officer would regard it his family duty to arrange for the placement of his son in the same service. A professor would see that his son becomes or is well on the road to becoming a professor. Failing that, an IAS officer or a professor would try to earn as much money as he could

for his son that the latter may not accuse his father of having been a bad father

It may be legitimately argued that filial affection is a university phenomenon. In all countries and all cultures, parents love their children and do all they can for their welfare. This, of course, is true.

But there is a difference, a big difference. The attitude of Hindu parents to their children is conditioned by values which are not same as, say, those of the Western parents. In a Hindu family, these values are basically religious. In the West, they are basically moral in the humanist sense of the terms with no reference to religion at all.

The very concepts of marriage and family prevailing in the West are diametrically opposed to those obtaining in India. In the Western Christian culture, the foundation of marriage is *love*, in the Indian Hindu culture it is *duty, social religious duty*.

The God of the Christians in the beginning, created Eve, to satisfy Adam's primarily spiritual emotional *need for a companion*. When Eve fell, Adam *chose* to fall for his *love* for Eve. It was his choice freely made in his capacity as an individual. When came Jesus Christ, he too emphasized *spiritual regeneration* as the way to salvation of man and woman from the *original sin* committed by Eve and Adam. Every man and every woman is *individually* responsible for his or her salvation of soul. Marriage or having children or no children has nothing to do with his salvation or damnation.

Accordingly in all spheres of life, people of the West believe in individual responsibility. Family is sacrosanct, but it is sacrosanct not in the religious but in the human sense. It is significant that almost all Christian rituals are performed in a harmonious congregation of individuals, none on the family level except a special lunch and dinner, which obviously has no religious character. Thus, marriage, having children or no children, etc., have nothing to do with salvation or damnation in the religious sense of the term.

In Hindu culture, on the other hand, marriage and having children are enjoyed upon men and women by religion. Of course, in Hindu religion there are other ways to salvations which can broadly be divided into two kinds. One is the way

to salvation for those who renounce society and live in the jungle; and the other is to live in society and lead family life. Obviously, 99.9 per cent of people belong to the second kind, and for them the way to salvation lies through marriage and having children, particularly sons. Since marriage is, thus, essentially a religious act, the question of individual feelings of love or of individual preference does not arise. Any girl after her first menses and any boy who has reached puberty are fit to be married. The purpose of marriage is not to experience the pleasures of love, which is, strictly speaking, forbidden by the Hindu religion.

The sole purpose of marriage is to produce children, particularly sons. For, according to the Hindu religion, the soul of a man after his death will never go to heaven unless he has a son to set fire to the funeral pyre and perform the *shradh* rituals. Having no son means the rotting of the man's soul in hell. The man's own pious deeds would make no difference. For, the fruit of the pious deeds is essentially achieved in the blessing of a son, who is a guarantee to his father's soul reaching heaven. The proof of the pious deeds is the son.

This religious belief is at the root of Hindu familism and determines consciously or unconsciously the attitudes of Hindu parents to their children. Out of this belief has sprung the Hindu craze for having sons. A son is a blessing, while a daughter is a curse. So Hindu parents would not stop producing children unless they are blessed with a son. In fact, they would not stop with having one son, for if the only son unfortunately dies, the salvation of the parents' souls would not be possible. Therefore, they must produce children until they have two, three, or more sons. The more the better.

As the saying goes among the Hindus: one rupee and one son is nothing. Of course, there are parents only of daughters and no sons. They are dubbed in Hindu society as the cursed ones. Blessed are the parents with sons. They are the god's favourites and command great respect in the Hindu social world. The cursed ones naturally try to appease the gods and goddesses in various ways to bless them also with a son at least.

This is why the overwhelming importance is attached to sons in the Hindu family, and again, 99.9 per cent of them get

spoilt. The parents look upon them not as distinct individuals free to grow in accordance with their own nature, but as only instruments of salvation of their own souls. The parents, therefore, become naturally, excessively protective. They are afraid of allowing them to take risk in life, lest they harm themselves. The parents' only concern is actually the physical life of their sons. Whether they grow mentally, study well, become better citizens or fit for better jobs in the world—all these considerations are of secondary importance.

In fact, good parents consider it their duty to earn enough by whatever means possible for their sons so that the latter might not put themselves to too much of trouble. The sons guarantee the parents' salvation, the parents in turn guarantee the sons' material affluence. The cycle thus goes on from generation to generation. Birth, marriage, copulation, reproduction, getting salvation of soul insured and death.

In Hindu society this religious belief in the son being the medium of the salvation of soul determines his other unique privileges in family. He is the inheritor of the property and he is free to lord over other members of the family, including his elder sisters and even his parents, all of whom adore and lionise him. He can be irresponsible, irascible, impatient, impudent, with impunity. The parents would still cling to him and blindly ignore all his follies. In case of the son having committed a crime the parents would still defend him as innocent. For the parents the son is the surest means to salvation and his being a good or bad man hardly matters, so long as he is alive to transport their souls to heaven.

It is not accidental for example, that the tear jerker films in Hindi most often are commercially greater successes than the other types. The plot of such films must revolve round the filial relations which make such tremendous impact upon the Hindu audiences. Even when there are occasionally crime and thriller films the origin of revenge more often than not is the temporary disruption of filial relationship.

In no other country's films except India's there are so many child characters included and plots so frequently woven round father-son or father-daughter or brother-sister relationship. Even romances must at some points be made poignant by some filial problems. Otherwise the romances would not be popular and

successful films. And, it hardly needs mention that the same formula is used by popular fiction writers in Hindi.

In the context of the above analysis, a number of Hindi cultural traits become easily understandable. For example, the Hindus are inherently incapable of leading a community life. They cannot understand the rationale behind it, for the only thing that makes any sense to them is their own family members, more particularly their own sons and daughters. A healthy community life demands a sharing of privileges, rights and duties which springs from an inborn faith in the equality of men and women.

But no Hindu parents would really accept that their sons and daughters are equal to those of other parents. To them, their own children are infinitely more than other children, because their salvation lies in the hands of their own children only. Numerous reports of sonless Hindu parents sacrificing male-children of other parents in their desperate bid to get a son of their own are published from time to time in the newspapers which provide a proof of the point.

It is true that not all Hindu parents would go to that extent, but the same belief is innately settled in the mind of the even highly educated and apparently Westernized Hindus too and it conditions their conduct in life. Even they think and act in terms of their sons and daughters first and society secondly. For this purpose, they would not hesitate changing rules and statutes and even wreck the society altogether. They can never accept the rule of law, the need of the social community as a whole or of the country.

The concept of democracy, therefore, is totally foreign to the Hindu mind. The basis of democracy is the equality of individuals irrespective of caste and creed. But the basis of Hinduism is the utmost, supreme, importance of sons, secondarily of daughters then of grandsons and granddaughters and, then, of other relations.

Those falling outside the circle of relations do not at all matter to the Hindus. Others as good do not exist or if they do, they can be tortured and even killed for the benefit of relations. Among the relations too, there are gradations of importance, at the head of which stand sons for whose sake other relations can be harassed and even put to death. This is

why so many horrible internecine family feuds occur in Hindu families

Under such circumstances democracy naturally would mean nothing to them. In fact any idea involving a concept of social community living means nothing to them.

No wonder Jawaharlal Nehru's ambitious plan of arousing the social consciousness of the Indian villagers through the Community Development Projects met with dismal failure. Nor is it any wonder that when democracy came with Independence it soon degenerated into mere clamour for power with a view to not serving the society as a whole but serving the family interests. Virulent corruption easily crept in because of the total lack of a social or national point of view though of course every political leader, great or small of every political party, glibly talked about it all the time.

Familism again is the dominating theme of the Hindu religious worship and prayer. The sole objective of religious worship is to be blessed with sons and riches. For whatever kind of man the worshipper is with sons and riches his place in the heaven is assured. Therefore if God blesses him with sons and riches he would need absolutely nothing else to be the happiest man on the earth. He would still be happy with sons sans riches but riches sans sons would make him feel cursed.

This is at least the definition of happiness one comes across in almost all Hindu scriptures and the Hindu epics. Consider for a while the Hindu prayers and devotional hymns down the ages those that are sung at the altar of the multifarious gods and goddesses. In all of them without exception gods and goddesses are requested to bless the devotees with children and wealth to make them happy in this world and ensure their salvation in the next.

In contrast no Christian devotional song has this sort of familism as its theme. In a Christian prayer the man who prays speaks *directly and individually to God* and asks for nothing like sons and riches. He reiterates the omnipotence of God the smallness of man and the need of God's grace to live his life fruitfully and meaningfully through whatever work he undertakes to do. The stress is on the spiritual purification through an enlarged understanding of the miracle of Jesus Christ through a readiness to suffer for good like Jesus.



Nothing of this kind can be found in the Hindu prayers. Suffering they hate and shun and regard as the curse of God, and the greatest suffering to them is not what makes Milton suffer in "On His Blindness" but to be childless and, secondly, poor.

This evidently determines the man-woman relationship in Hindu culture. Since the only objective of marriage is to produce sons, any woman is good enough to be married to any man, provided, of course, both belong to the same caste. For sons born of a woman belonging to the lower caste would not be religiously eligible to perform the funeral rites of their parents and thus would not assure the salvation of their souls. But any woman of the same caste would undoubtedly be good enough. Love to most Hindus is an unheard of thing, and is, at any rate, associated with downright corruption and waste.

In the Hindu marriage, marriage of minds and marriage of hearts do not at all enter. Emotion and feeling have no place. Man and woman mate in the midst of elaborate rituals, all of which are designed to appease the deities to make the woman bear sons to her man. If and when she does, no matter how nasty natured she is, she is valued greatly by all members of the family including, of course, her husband. If, unfortunately, she does not conceive or bears only daughters, she earns the opprobrium of everybody, not excluding her husband.

Thus her position in the family, and her relation to her husband is dependent upon her bearing or not bearing sons. And once she has given birth to sons, the sole purpose of marriage is fully achieved and with that her function is also finished as a woman. Thereafter, she must live as a mother, and, in a majority of cases, this stage of motherhood begins at the age of 15 or 16 and, in the Hindu society, they are universally considered to be the happiest of women.

This explains the predominance of sex in the various expressions of the Hindu culture. In the Hindu paintings and sculpture, the most beautiful are the ones with big breasts and bulky buttocks and fleshy thighs—all suggestive of the woman's child bearing capacity. Gradually, they became the elements of the Indian aesthetic concept of a woman's beauty. Again, the sex urge is the predominant theme of the Indian dance and music sex leading to reproduction.

The whole of Hindu metaphysics is symbolised by the *Shivalinga* firmly stalled perpendicularly on the vagina shaped platform. It symbolizes the mating of *Prakriti* and *Purush*, woman and man, leading to creation. Sex, in the Hindu culture, is not a part of man's or woman's experience.

Both mate without feeling like animals, only with this difference that man and woman can sometimes make a game of the sexual intercourse. Vatsyayan's *Kama Sutra* and the engravings on the Khajuraho temple are essentially the artistic expressions of the same sex games. But whether it be game some sex or serious sex, there is no place for feeling for each other on the part of the partners. In fact, in the Hindu man-woman sex relations the question of their being partners never arises. Woman must submit passively to man who must dominate over her. The *Kama Shastras* and the Khajuraho engravings are precisely lessons in the art and science of how man can dominate woman in the sexual intercourse.

These significant facts underneath the glossy and highly romanticized (by the Western scholars and artists, not by Indians themselves) surface of the Indian social culture indicate the stupendousness of the task of modernizing and democratizing the Indian society. Any plan of action based only on economic incentive is bound to run into difficulties because of the continuing barbaric elements in the contemporary Indian culture.

Familism is only one of them, though, undoubtedly the most central of all of them. The Hindus do accept modern education, modern technology, but their attitude to life and the world remain unaffected and continue to be governed by familism. They would be happy to derive all the economic benefits from the modernized industrial society so long as the benefits come to their family members without their sharing social and economic obligations with other members of the society.

The more important need is to provide really modern education on a mass scale and, along with it, create an appropriate social climate to bring about a fundamental change in their cultural and social outlook—change from familism to humanism from a set of barbaric beliefs to modern scientific rationalism.

And a definite beginning in this direction can only be made by dispassionately scrutinizing certain deep-seated malaise of our own cultural heritage.

## NINE

### THE HINDU ATTITUDE TO WORLDLY RICHES

Hindus are famed to be proverbially other worldly in their attitude to life. They are said to be indifferent to the mundane things of the world they live in. Pelf, it is said, they regard as paltry, and earthly power insignificant and deceptive. The contemporary world to them is *Maya*, and all their life they are known to be trying to overcome the spell of *Maya* in order to attain salvation of their soul.

Some defeat the pernicious design of *Maya* by renouncing the world altogether and becoming "sadhus." Others stay on in the world but, with their mind and heart set to the other world, speed their lives performing religious rituals worshipping gods and goddesses, going on pilgrimages and doing good deeds like giving alms to the poor, building temples and reading the scriptures.

This is so highly romanticized a picture of the Hindus so colourful a blend of few obvious facts and a lot of imaginative fiction that one might be justified in saying that nothing could be farther from truth than the above portrayal of the Hindus. For this mythical picture of the Hindus however the responsible persons are the popular Western writers,—mostly British and German—to whom the Hindu India struck as a land of wonder and enigmatic charm. Consequently, it was not possible for them to be consistently objective nor able to look deep beneath the surface.

In fact there is nothing in the ancient myths and legends of India nor in its recorded history to warrant the view that the Hindus have been indifferent to acquiring worldly affluence and power. On the contrary, wealth and worldly power are invariably glorified in the myths and legends. They abound

with the tales of kings and queens, though the latter play not active part.

All *avatars* (incarnations) of *Vishnu* in the form of human being have been kings, such as Rama and Krishna. Even in other monstrous forms such as *Vaman* and *Narsinh*, the *avatars* are shown to be infinitely more powerful than the kings on the earth. But, significantly, kings predominate, and the riches of the kings are prominently displayed.

Lord Indra, the King of the Hindu gods, is described with all the panoply of an earthly king: the richly decorated court, the flattering courtiers, the captivating, eternally young, courtesans, his inexhaustible wealth and mighty power. In the Greek mythology which bears a good deal of resemblance to the Hindu mythology, Lord Zeus is Lord Indra's counterpart, but is nowhere described as a rich king with a court and the various regal appurtenances. The Greek myths stress the "might" of Zeus; the Indian myths stress the kingly splendour of Indra.

The enemies of the gods too have to be kings: Ravana, Kansa, Hiranyakashyapa and a host of others, big and small. Were the enemies poor, the conqueror-gods would not, in the Hindu mind, be credited with glory.

As for the celebrated *bhakta-janas* (devotees) they are invariably shown to be poor in the beginning, but later invariably made kings or as rich as kings. In the *Ramayana* there are stories of Sugriva and Vibhishan, both dispossessed by their brothers and living as almost mendicants, to whom their kingdoms are restored by Lord Rama. In the *Mahabharata*, the whole story deals with the possession, dispossession, and, again, possession of a kingdom. The unfortunate ones are those who are dispossessed; the fortunate ones are those who possess the kingdom and who rule.

It could be easily noticed that misfortune and suffering are always suggested to be equated with poverty, and joy and happiness with riches and affluence. The most typical illustration of this is the story of Sudama and Krishna. When Lord Krishna recognised a *bhakta* in Sudama and was exceedingly pleased with his devotion, the Lord overnight offered him riches which would be the envy of the wealthiest of kings.

Any number of illustrations could be cited from the Indian mythology in support of the view that riches have not been

looked upon even by the gods and their great *bhaktas* with contempt. As a matter of fact, riches have always been associated in the Hindu mind with the blessings of the gods, and, as a corollary, poverty with the curse.

This mythical-traditional belief has taken such deep roots in the Hindu mind that even in the modern times it appears to have been more often over-awed by the riches that a man possesses rather than by the kind of man he is.

Is it an accident of history that the great Indians in any field of learning or activity—except perhaps football and wrestling—have all been rich men? The rule appears to be: the richer the men, the greater the popularity they achieved. This is true of religious reformers, literary writers, artists, as well as of social and political leaders. Take Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and Subhas Chandra Bose, for example, all of whom were extraordinarily rich. This is not to deny their great individual attainments and attributes. But what is undeniable is that the part of the spell they cast on the Hindu mind is to be traced to their belonging originally to rich families.

More typical is the case of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. When we were young, we used to hear fantastic tales about the legendary wealth of Pandit Motilal Nehru and how he lavished it on his only son, Jawaharlal. One of them was that the Viceroy of India once called on Pandit Motilal Nehru and happened to visit the bath-room of the house. The Viceroy felt ashamed, because he saw the bath was cleaner and more beautifully furnished than his own bed-room. Another such tale, more popular, was that Pandit Jawaharlal's clothes used to be laundered in Paris and carried to and from there by aeroplane. These were pure fancies of the popular imagination, of course, but the point is that it took pleasure and a pride in inventing such tales which were designed to cast a magic halo round the story of his renunciation of the family wealth and his struggle for freedom.

The story of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is typical, but the general trend is to be perceived everywhere, in all walks of life, in the Hindu society. The priests of the Hindu temples, for example, accord preferences to worshippers in accordance with their financial status. At Varanasi, Jagannathdham,

Rameshwaram or at Haridwar, the priests offer the front seats at the temples to those who have paid the highest amount as *dakshinas* to them. Thereafter, the preference is determined strictly by the amount of money paid by the pilgrims. Now, the significant point is that this is not regarded as "corruption" by the Hindus, let alone evil. This is considered to be a legitimate religious practice both by the orthodox and liberal Hindus.

In no other religious community, such a religious sanctity is attached to the riches. Take Christianity for example. In the church, no distinction is even faintly made between the rich and the poor. They occupy seats in the order of their arrival. Again, the contributions that the people in the church give are kept strictly secret. Every one drops whatever money he or she wants to pay his or her contribution into the covered collection bag without the amount being noticed by anyone else. Thus, the Christians make absolutely no fuss over the contribution one has made. Nor would any contributor, whatever big amount he has paid, would expect, lest of all, demand, any special position or privilege, on the basis of his contribution.

A Hindu, on the other hand, would proclaim his or her contribution as prominently as possible. He or she would get his or her name and address engraved on a marble plaque and get it fixed at the entrance of the temple. Often, ceiling fans carry the inscription of the name and address of the donor.

One of the most ludicrous such sights is offered by the three-kilometer walk from Lakshman Jhula to Geeta Bhawan at Rishikesh. One side of the entire stretch of the walk is covered by bench structures of red chips with inscriptions in black of the names and the addresses of the donors. One need not mention the *dharmsalas* and temples and other religious charitable buildings which bear the names of the *dharmaatma* donors.

That all this even today is accepted as legitimately religious only goes to confirm the fact that in the eye of a Hindu to be rich is to be God's favourite and to be poor is to be cursed. Therefore, those who have got riches must use a part of it in impressing upon the priests as well as other members of the society that they are the *dharmaatmas*, and destined to be born in wealthy families in the next life. And, the priests and the people are over awed.

Since the Hindus regard wealth as God's manifest blessing, they have seldom been concerned with the economics of the production and distribution of it, least of all, with the idea of social and economic justice. They would not even try to understand the ways and means of earning wealth. For they regard it as axiomatic that wealth is not *really* earned, it is, in some way or the other, bestowed by the gods on the fortunate, ones.

Conversely, Hindus are disinclined to investigate into the means by which an individual has come to possess wealth. Whatever the means, the fact of an individual having become rich is enough to convince them that he is or was in his previous life, a *dharmatma*, a favourite of the gods, and, therefore, he is naturally blessed with rich rewards.

This explains why the known black-marketeers, smugglers, tax evaders, bribe takers and others—criminals in the eye of the law—continue to be most respectable people in the Hindu society. Far from looking down upon them, Hindus secretly hold them in esteem and are envious of them. Several corrupt government officials having been forcibly retired or dismissed lead quite respectable lives in the society and become the valued patrons of the temple priests. Some of the big defalcators are said to have spent large chunks of the embezzled money over building temples and *dharamsalas*.

Perhaps in no other religion of the world, wealth that a man earns is regarded as the blessing of God. What is still more peculiar is that rich men among Hindus can attain salvation more easily by spending large sums on religious rituals than the poor men who have nothing to spend, though even the latter—such is the hold of religion—would rather spend on religious rituals than, say, on the education of their children.

How to explain this strange, if not barbaric, feature of the Hindu religion and culture? And how to reconcile it with the conventionally romantic view of Hindus being indifferent to the worldly riches? Any adequate answer would require an elaborate and close analyses of the various aspects of the Hindu religion and culture, but here only certain salient points need be mentioned.

First, the Hindu religion unlike most other religions, is *external* to man, and not *internal*. That is, the need of an inner

faith in God and a code of conduct in the social and worldly relationship are foreign to Hindus.

As John McKenzie says in his excellent book on *Hindu Ethics*:

"Hinduism has, properly speaking, no New Testament.... Is there any record in the annals of Hinduism upto modern times of any great religious movement which found its chief expression in a pure yet active social morality? Is there anything comparable to the movement which St. Francis of Assisi initiated and led?"\*

Since, salvation in Hindu religion is dependent upon performance of ritualistic worship, sometimes even by proxy, an inner faith in a personal code of conduct in society has not been evolved by Hindu philosophy. A Hindu thus attaches no importance to society, or his personal conduct in the society. To him a ritualistic bath in the Ganges at Haridwar fully ensures his salvation than being good to his neighbour. Thus, all the attributes of a good Hindu are related to the performance of external rituals and not to his conduct with other human beings.

Secondly, the relationship of Hindus to the gods is also based upon a system of rewards, visible and concrete rewards in the shape of wealth and sons. Good deeds which please the gods in Hinduism mean merely performances of rituals, and the proofs of the gods having been pleased are seen in terms of the amount of wealth and the number of sons bestowed upon the devotee as reward. This system operates on lower levels as well.

A man wanting promotion in service would try to appease the gods offering flowers and sweets at the temples rather than to try to become more efficient in his job. An unmarried girl performs rituals to get a good husband and married women do likewise to beget sons and daughters. So also, a student would go to the temple and offer money and sweets at the altar rather than study well at home. Even politicians have gone to the temples with rich offerings to appease the gods to ensure victory in the elections or their places in the cabinet of ministers.

\*John McKenzie, *Hindu Ethics*, Oxford University Press, 1922, p. 251



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perform his duties in both the realms and not think of the fruits, for the fruits are bound to be achieved in accordance with duties. This is the essence of what Lord Krishna says to Arjuna in despair to persuade him to take up the arms against his own relations and kill them.

This philosophy basic to the Hindu mind makes it easy for a Hindu to go on amassing fortunes by all sorts of means and yet retain the peace of his mind. For him, sin is not related to his deeds to other fellowmen and women, it is not performing the age-old prescribed rituals and acting upon the religious conventions. For an upper caste Hindu, for example, not to wear the sacred thread is a sin, but to adulterate food-stuff to make a huge profit is no sin. He will get no prick of the conscience, because a Hindu is basically devoid of the faculty of conscience.

The contrast with the modern Christian culture should now be clear. It should not be difficult to notice that in reality the Hindus are fundamentally much more materialistic than the Christians in the West. The latter believe in *earning* wealth and, accordingly, work hard, use their intellect and manage the worldly affairs rationally. Besides, they admit of no link between wealth and personal salvation. To them wealth is the product of man's hard work and must necessarily be shared with other men and be used for the upliftment of other fellowmen.

Numerous cases of Christian wealthy men donating their entire property to the social and educational welfare institutions have been reported in the papers. Not a single Hindu is reported to have done this, though he may have donated large sums to temples and dharamsalas. Christians, thus, realize spiritual experience in the act of sharing wealth or renouncing it for the benefit of the community, while the Hindus think they are the blessed ones for being or growing rich.

Therefore, the Hindus enjoy riches monstrously, having the least compunction about other poor destitute fellowmen in the society whom they consider god-forsaken and, therefore, justly hungry and thirsty and diseased and dying like cats and dogs. From this standpoint callousness appears to be an essential attribute of the Hindu religion.

The modern liberal education being imparted to the Hindus for over the last century and a half has made at best only

marginal difference in the Hindu's attitude to life and the worldly riches. To the social philosophy and the moral vision behind the English education derived from the Christian culture, the age old, obtuse, arrogant Hindu culture was incapable of responding.

But, the Hindus took to English studies in the same spirit as they had taken to Urdu studies before to secure the favour of the rulers for jobs and, more than jobs, for rewards and gifts with which to become rich, and thereby secure happiness in this world and the salvation in the other.

Nevertheless, during the British rule, quite a number of Hindus, mostly in the big cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, did acquire a modern attitude towards wealth and ceased to think of it as proof of god's blessings or a necessary means to soul's salvation, though, even in them, the attitude never becomes a part of their consciousness.

After the coming of Independence, however, the Hindus, now free from constraints, started *making*, not *earning*, money badly and gaining enormous social prestige. Everywhere in the world, it is true, money matters as a means to social prestige. In India, accumulation of wealth, in addition, gains religious and moral prestige among the members of the society. And, more so if the wealth accumulated is *unearned* or *earned easily*.

That is why the craze for the jobs of engineers and doctors. Not because the Indian youths find the jobs challenging and intellectually rewarding, but because these two services offer unlimited scope for gathering unearned money. From the very beginning their eyes are on finding the ways and means of making money without getting caught by the law. They are least concerned with self improvement in the job skills. Were it so our engineers and doctors too would have made their own distinct contributions to the world knowledge of engineering technology and medical and surgical science.

What is true of these two fields of discipline is also true of other disciplines and other professions and, undeniably, truer of politician administrators and bureaucrats. They use or misuse their official powers and privileges in the service of their traditional beliefs practised at home.

The recent jet age yogis of fabulous affluence provide another example of the Hindu's fondness for wealth. The richer they become, the wider and deeper spell they cast on the Hindu

followers both in India and abroad. Even when the *yogis* are prosecuted for the criminal offence of smuggling foreign currency and gold their disciples remain completely unaffected. The latter would rather blame the prosecuting authorities.

One of the reasons why a lot of Western young men and women—Hippies and the Flower-Children and so on—as also some affluent rich persons of advanced age have fallen under the charm of these *yogis* is that the latter free them from their Christian conscience. These Western disciples constitute an amalgam of those who under the influence of modern science and technology have been disenchanted with Christianity and crave for exotic experiences as well as of those who, dissatisfied with Christianity, are in search of a religion which would leave their aggrandisement out of religious consideration. The Hindu *yogis* ask them to make as much money as possible without bothering about how they make it and have as unrestrained sex life as they can for these activities have no relation to religious-spiritual experience. This comes to the Westerners as a new revelation.

Now this aspect of Hindu culture presents another big obstacle in the way of modernization of the Hindu society. Even big Hindu industrial magnates, while managing modern industrial plants and modern tools of economic and commercial analysis, at home and in their social outlook remain largely traditional, sometimes ridiculously so.

The result is that the modern outlook which should have emanated from them and flowed down to the general people gets lost in the dense fog of traditional social and religious practices. Secondly, because of the Hindu's traditional attitude to wealth as god's blessing and not the product of man's labour for the benefit of the individual and society, most Hindus waste wealth in entirely non-productive channels, thereby perpetuating poverty and backwardness in the society.

## TEN

### MAN WOMAN RELATIONSHIP IN HINDU SOCIETY

Critical studies of the Hindu culture are rare to come by. Whatever studies are there have been made mostly by the Western scholars during the last about 200 years. Among the Hindus, there has been no tradition of critical appraisal of their own culture and religion. To them the supremacy of their culture and religion, often indistinguishable, has been beyond dispute, and, therefore, needs no analytical examination.

After the dissemination of Western liberal education in India and the initiative taken by the Western scholars, some studies were, of course, made. But generally the studies both by the Western as well as Indian Scholars suffer from some inherent limitations. While the Western scholars have been overwhelmed by the "mysteries" of an exotic religion and culture and therefore, unable to examine the whole thing from the humanist point of view, the Indian scholars have often been swayed by a keen desire to justify and uphold as great every aspect of their cultural religious heritage.

Nowhere is this so glaringly remarkable as in the realm of man woman relationship in the Hindu culture. This is an extremely complex area of study. The Hindu myths and legends present bafflingly contradictory pictures of woman's place in the family and society. If on the one hand, she is conceived as the source of all power, the embodiment of *Shakti*, on the other, she is no more than a helpless weakling depending on man for her survival. In between lie the endless variations difficult to sift into neat categories.

What is, however, remarkably common in all those pictures is man's dominance over woman. And, secondly, no less remarkable is the fact that a woman is no more than a female sex organism designed to give pleasures to man, pleasures of

sex and attaining a sort of immortality through giving birth to his children. Beyond this she has no function to perform, neither social, nor political, nor economic, nor even cultural.

As a child her sex must be protected by her parents, as a young wife, it must be wholly the property of her husband who must protect it with all his might, and, as a mother, ceasing to be sexually attractive, she must devote herself wholly to the rearing up of her children, and, if she has a grown-up son, she must live under his control in addition to the control of her husband. As a human being with a distinct individuality she has no place in her family and society.

In fact, the concept of woman as *Shakti* itself is born out of imagining woman as the inexhaustible repository of overwhelming and undissipated sex power. The goddesses known as *Shakti* incarnations such as *Durga*, *Kali*, *Vaishno Devi* and others are significantly all virgins, pure and concentrated sex-power, and therefore, all powerful against demons.

Married goddesses such as *Lakshmi*, *Parvati*, *Sita*, etc., are homely figures and providing the archetypes of ideal womanhood in Hindu culture. Often in popular religious pictures they are shown as sitting at and massaging the feet of their husbands or walking or sitting docilely behind them.

From this emerged the idea of a virtuous wife. She is the one who is happy in her becoming totally subservient to her husband, whose sole justification for living is to serve him and keep him happy by all means. Her husband is her god, living god, on earth and her salvation lies in her total devotion to him, irrespective of the treatment he metes out to her or the kind of man he himself is. He may abuse, physically beat and torture her in all possible ways, but if she is a good Hindu wife, she would not only not protest, she would dutifully lick the feet that kick at her.

The woman would not protest, because the conduct of her husband is not for her to question. Secondly, her own idea of happy life is just to have her husband and children alive and live under the same roof. If the husband keeps other women, it is his pleasure, even prerogative. Her happiness lies in being dutifully obedient to her lord, and in enjoying the social-conventional status of being wedded wife to her husband. Rukmini, for example, was Lord Krishna's wedded wife, but the

Lord was said to have kept 16,000 beauties in his harem, and yet Rukmini was happy with Krishna and her children

The myths and legends of the *Mahabharata* illustrate the nature of man-woman relationship on the level of mortal beings. The chief of them is the tale of Draupadi herself, the central woman figure in the epic

As a child, I remember I used to contemplate long over the irreconcilable aspects of Draupadi and her five husbands. The question that never really got resolved was: How could Draupadi be devoted to her five husbands at the same time? The question was made more complex by the fact that her five husbands were five brothers—the five sons of Pandava. In the Hindu religious code, it was a sin for the wife of one brother to have sexual intercourse with the other, particularly the elder one. Did not, then, Draupadi commit a sin every time she slept with one of the five brothers?

My mates and I toyed with many fanciful solutions to the riddle, one of them being that Draupadi had five vaginas, one earmarked and reserved for each brother. Thus, no brother actually committed the sin of incest and Draupadi remained chaste to each one of her husbands, which was, of course, a childish solution to the riddle, which remains a riddle still.

If, as some historians have suggested, Draupadi having five husbands exemplifies the existence of matriarchal society, how was she placed as property for the gambling bet by Yudhishthir? As the head of the matriarchal family, she should have asserted her own independent authority rather than been dragged by Dushashbana to the open arena to be made nude in public, which gives a lie to the matriarchal theory.

In the whole corpus of the Hindu myths and legends, there is not a single love story of the kind we find in the ancient French or German myths and legends. The Hindu ones, in the depiction of man-woman relationship, approximate the barbaric Greek and Roman myths and legends. And even here, there is a difference. The cause of both the Trojan war and the Mahabharata war is said to be a woman.

But there is a whole world of difference between Helen and Draupadi. Helen is a woman of strong self-will. She falls in love with Paris and elopes of her own sweet will, caring a fig for the consequences that might follow. From the ethical-

moral point of view, she is a fallen woman, but, unquestionably, a woman of distinct individuality. Draupadi, on the other hand, is a woman completely devoid of any will power of her own and accepts to be treated as the most precious piece of property by her husbands. She is the cause of the Mahabharata war not because she is a fallen woman but because she is a fiercely virtuous woman struggling to protect her chastity till the last breath.

The cause of the war is the outraged prestige and honour of the five husbands who, bound by their own word, were silent and helpless witnesses to the denuding of Draupadi. Since woman is man's property, it is his duty to protect her and keep her under his possession. It requires, so the saying goes and is still alive in the Hindu mind, manly strength to protect one's land and woman, without which both can be snatched away by others, a saying which became more popular in course of the contact with the Muslim culture.

The much celebrated Krishna legends too, contrary to popular opinion, are not stories of love. Love is a mutual recognition of the individuality of the two separate beings and of the spiritual need to share the two lives together. The Krishna legends are so heavily dominated by Krishna as against the charmed, infatuated, meek, awe-struck and submissive village milk-maids that there can be no possibility of love. Indian poets have no doubt invested the Krishna legends with fancies of metaphysical love, but in the popular mind the image that has seeped through the religious lore and got settled at the back of it is the plain supremacy of male over female, of Krishna over the village girls who, laden with their own cravings for sexual union with him, must submit themselves wholly to him.

It is they who crave for Krishna, not Krishna for them—a pattern which still operates fully in the Hindu man-woman relationship before or after marriage. The ideal inculcated into the consciousness of a Hindu woman from her cradle onward is that of Krishna's milk-maids, Ram's Sita, Satyavan's Savitri and so on, and she can never have any awareness of herself being a person with any sense of independence.

A good Hindu woman never acquires her own likes and dislikes. She learns from observing other women around her to



accept the likes and dislikes determined for her first by her father and, later, by her husband. She learns, indeed, to believe that her father's or husband's dislikes are her own and is happily satisfied. The faintest of any such idea that every being exists primarily for the realization of oneself can never occur to her in the wildest of her dreams.

An educated Hindu woman, perhaps, has sometimes read about things like individuality, love, feelings, but even she can never really imbibe them and feel the need to realise them in her own life. She prides on being under male's domination. Indeed, she considers it a blessing, however dominating, tyrannical, the male might be.

That is one reason why a Hindu woman regards remaining single as nothing short of a curse. That is why Hindu parents never have restful sleep until they are able to dispose of their daughters in marriage to whoever happens to be available. Nothing can be more cursed than a daughter remaining unmarried. In the Hindu society, there are no spinsters. Exceptionally, some Hindu spinsters can be found in the metropolitan cities among highly educated working women. But, then, they are hardly good Hindus, and, in any case, are exceptions which only prove the rule.

Now the reason behind this universally accepted moral code in the Hindu society, according to which an ideal woman is totally subjugated to man and is happy in enjoying her subjugation, is sex. Hindu myths and legends have generated a belief that woman is nothing but sex.

While man has other faculties such as intelligence, reasoning and so on and has to comprehend and control the processes of nature and the functioning of the society, a woman is remarkably deficient in mental faculties and enormously rich in sexual urge and strong in sexual passions. If left unbridled and unprotected, she would readily have sexual intercourse with all and sundry and at all times of night and day leading to the destruction of family and society. This had to be put under restraints, so that human society does not degenerate into the chaos of the animal world.

It is not without significance that in orthodox Hindu society, women are debarred from participating in the performance of religious rituals, for they are no better than animals.

They are forbidden to read the *Ve las* and the *Gita*. In fact, they are forbidden to read anything and know anything about what goes on in the world.

Their functions are limited to be married, to have sexual intercourse with their husbands, to give birth to children and to look after the household. All these functions have their codes of conduct which the Hindu women are made to imbibe from their very childhood, and all the codes are designed to put the women's animal sex under curb and the control of men.

Thus the complete subjugation of woman by man has been born of the belief that she is unable to control her overwhelming sexual urge by herself and must be taken care of by man. Consequently, man has enmeshed her in a net of well defined duties and obligations—all reminding her that she is no more than a bundle of sexual functions and of the need to perform them to the satisfaction and pleasure of man.

And, the idea that she is no more than sex to man is drilled into the depth of her mind from birth by her mother, sisters, and other women relations as also by her father, brother and, later, husband. With every restraint put upon her movement as the girl grows up, with every gossip about her marriage from the day she menstruates she becomes acutely and abnormally conscious of her sex and the need to submit it wholly to her husband, whoever he might be.

As a result of this man woman relationship either before or after marriage is never accompanied by human feelings or a desire to understand each other. To a Hindu boy, a girl is nothing but female sex to be fucked. And a Hindu girl on her part, thinks about herself exactly in the same manner. To her, a boy can have nothing to do with her but fucking. That is why, she is afraid of even a boy's approach, and a boy gets nervous at a girl's approach. They cannot look upon each other except as creatures of sex and motivated by nothing except an urge for sexual intercourse.

The idea of companionship does not exist for them. They are motivated by sheer animal sex urge. That is why, the boys can cast ugly and abusive remarks at the girls, can ogle at them, rub their bodies against theirs in a *mela* crowd, can even pounce upon them in an isolated and dark place, but cannot become

their companions even for a while. And, as for the girls too, they regard all this on the part of the boys as natural and normal, since what are they but bodies with sex parts meant for men?

Here is the root of the prevailing custom of the arranged marriage where the duties of man and woman as husband and wife are clearly laid down from beginning to end. Of course, other social considerations have entered into the institution of the arranged marriage, but it still appeals to our "educated" men and women because thereby they escape the responsibility of choosing in a field where they think choosing is an enigma.

Marriage, to them, is a socio religious sanction for sexual intercourse between any man and any woman with the sole purpose of procreation. Once, however they come together, they have elaborate duties to perform, to each other, to other family members and to society. Man in the arranged marriage, remains the lord of woman whom he uses the way he likes, and the woman must dutifully let him feel his supremacy.

From the family and social affairs, it very often extends to even the sexual intercourse. A good Hindu wife would never take initiative on her own in the matter. The initiative must come from the husband and when it comes, she has to do nothing but pull up her sari and lay herself down for him. He wastes no time in love play. He has nothing to talk about. Fondling and kissing are meaningless. So he gets going immediately with the commencement of the act itself. The woman must not become active. She must keep passively lying and let her husband finish off.

Even in the bed, the woman is not her man's partner. She must all the time play a passive role, be obedient and unquestioning. If she becomes active immediately she would be declared as a fallen woman and dealt with in the harshest possible manner.

It is significant that in the Hindu social culture the definition of a "good" woman as distinguished from a "bad" woman is solely derived from her being sexually restrained or loose. The one unpardonable crime for an unmarried girl is to have sexual intercourse with any man, though, strangely enough, it is considered no crime at all for a man to have sexual relations with other girls even before his marriage. For this crime, the

girl could be hacked into pieces, whereas the man for the same crime would not even be touched. Again, after marriage, while a husband has the social sanction to punish and torture his wife on the mere suspicion of her having sexual relation with any other man, the wife, on the other hand, can do nothing to her husband if he keeps and sleeps with other women.

If a woman is ill-tempered, arrogant, nagging, boorish, selfish, querrulous and so on but is sexually faithful to her husband, she is still a "good" woman. On the other hand, she may be extremely good-natured, selfless, quiet, humble and refined, but if she is suspected of being sexually inclined to any other man except her husband, she would be considered a "bad" woman.

Since the husband-wife relationship in the Hindu social culture is no more than dutiful sex, boredom and disgust are writ large on every couple. A smiling and happy team of husband and wife is such a rarity that it is very often regarded as unreal. The reality is complete unconcern between the two, complete lack of the need of any communication.

The primacy of having children as the only objective of marriage clearly emanates from the solely sex relation between husband and wife. And once a child is born to them—particularly a male child—the whole objective of marriage has been achieved. After that, it becomes the duty of the wife to nourish and bring up the child, while the man feels free to go to other fresher women for sexual pleasure. Then, the wife cannot morally even ask her husband not to go to other women. For even she knew from the beginning that she was given to him in marriage solely for producing children, and that purpose having been achieved, he is free to go to other women, even prostitutes.

Of the Hindu society, therefore, prostitutes are an inalienable part. For Hindus make clear-cut distinction between women without children and women with children. The former are fit to be sexually enjoyed, while the latter are not. Women who are mothers are immediately placed on a sanctimonious pedestal and men approach them with respect. The women themselves, once they become mothers, however young they are, treat themselves indifferently and carelessly, because

they know they have ceased to be sexually attractive to men. And those women with children who still deck themselves up are secretly looked down upon by others and even told so in their face.

But this does not apply to men. After they become fathers, they are free to go to other women, available in the society or the prostitutes. Prostitutes are mentioned in the earliest of the Indian myths and legends. *Menakas* and *Kinnaris* have been the prominent features of divine as well as secular courts, from Lord Indra's to the King Vikramaditya's Court. These are women eternally young, and eternally young because they are without children.

In the traditional lores, they are mentioned with sympathy and as women of eternal sexual attraction; but they cannot have the respect reserved for women-mothers. The former are meant for pure sex relations; the latter are above sex relations. And, as for wives, they are meant for dutiful sex relations. Thus, sex remains the sole determinant of the relations between Hindu man and woman.

For the first time, the Hindus came to be aware of the idea of love with the establishment of the Muslim rule in India. Although Muslims practised polygamy, the man-woman relationship in their community admits of romance and love. However formal the consent, but the consent of the girl is necessary to be obtained before she is married to any man. It is not an accident that nearly all romantic love legends of modern India have Muslim characters such as Laila-Majanu and Shirin-Farhad totally unaffected by this aspect of the Muslim. In fact, because of the political and religious antagonism, the Hindus withdrew more and more into the cocoons of their social-religious rituals and conventions.

Relatively speaking, the 200 years of British Raj, with its liberal, scientific, humanistic education, made a deeper impact on the Hindu mind in the realm of man-woman relationship. Some of the English-educated Hindu youths fed on Shakespeare, Keats and Shelley, acquainted, however superficially, with European psychology and philosophy, and having somewhat imbibed a sense of individuality, rebelled against their traditional authority in order to marry for love.

If many of these marriages have failed, the reason is that

the old, centuries-old, convictions have not really died and arisen again and again to disrupt the new relationship. Even up to about 95 per cent of Hindu boys and girls studying in colleges and universities today would fail to grasp the experience of love and would hardly feel the need of marrying for love. For the hold of the Hindu culture on the young minds continues to be still strong. It is easy to be traditional than modern.

There is a hope that with the possibilities of the big technological, scientific and economic changes occurring in the society and the resultant crumbling of the traditional values, the man-woman relationship too is bound to change from mere sex to rich, fruitful love. But the hope may yet not be realized.

Hindus have a peculiarly extraordinary capacity for what Milton Singer has termed as "compartmentalization". So far, the scientific-technological progress has not made a *real* impact on the Hindu's attitude to socio-religious cultural matters. The impact is limited to superficialities. This has added enormously to the confusion of values and the crisis of identity leading to a stagnation in the healthy process of thinking in general. Easy, dutiful sex in personal family life is conducive to the growth of authoritarianism in public life. Love, on the other hand, is conducive to the growth of fruitful liberal democracy.

## ELEVEN

### THE HINDU ATTITUDE TO WORK

The need for the slogan, "Work More, Talk Less," ironically provides one of the irrefutable evidences of India's fundamental cultural unity. From Kashmir to Kanyakumari and from Surat to Shillong, the striking similarity of the entire people's attitude to work is revelatory of a complete cultural fusion of diverse traits in the course of the country's recent history of about a thousand years. It is not necessary here to take shelter behind such a rhetorical metaphysical paradox as 'Unity in Diversity'. Here is unity, pure and simple, cutting across all differences and anomalies in the Indian national life.

Men and women, the youth and the old, of all castes, creeds, communities, regions, religions and irrespective of their being rich or poor, literate or illiterate, intellectual or non intellectual, are unmistakably one in their common attitude to work. Whether they are masters or slaves, business executives or industrial workers, landlords or peasant-labourers, teachers or students, leaders or followers, what binds them together is the sameness of their approach to the problem of work in life.

This aspect of the Indian cultural unity can be briefly and unambiguously stated in precise terms. All Indians, with almost no exceptions, grow up to believe that work is a curse and "no-work" is a blessing.

Now it can be argued that this belief in one form or the other prevails in most, if not all, of the cultures of the world. Even in Christianity, the culture of the most advanced countries where people are said to take to work as inevitably as to breathing, work, in accordance with the Biblical myth, is basically a curse. This is the curse which fell on Adam when he was driven out of Eden. In Eden he could rest—and rest all the time, eat and roam about whenever he felt inclined to and

just do nothing. That was the blessed state. He disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit and God cursed him and Eve to quit Eden and go out into the world whereto they would have to work to satisfy their ever-multiplying needs and desires.

But the Indian concept of work as a curse is of an entirely different kind and can be easily contrasted with the Christian concept. In Christianity, work is an unavoidable curse which accompanies the birth of a human child. Every Christian is born with the Original Sin and he or she must work his or her way to salvation, to peace and joy of life.

Indeed, the Christian theologians and philosophers, particularly of the Puritan Church, have gone to the extent of raising work to the highest level of prayer. Work, they maintain, is the best form of prayer. The Christians have, thus, turned the curse into a blessing. If the curse of work is the inescapable fate of man, the only way to redemption lies in doing his work well to the best of his capacity.

The Indian attitude to work, on the other hand, is determined by a deep seated faith that work is a curse which befalls only the unfortunate—those souls which in their earlier births had not performed their religious rituals or done their duties according to the *shashtras*. Such souls are cursed by the gods to be born in poor families, where they have to keep working their whole lives for their daily bread.

Labourers, workers and menials, are at the lowest level of the cursed souls. At the slightly higher rung belong the merchants, office clerks, salesmen, *munshis*, *patwaris*, and so on. Still higher up are the teachers, writers, journalists—in short, the intellectuals. Further up are the bureaucrats, big business executives, directors of companies and academics, minor ministers and so on. The blessed ones, whom the gods have sent to this world to fully enjoy the pleasures of life are the rest—the



The innate drive is always to acquire a position where money will keep flowing to them without having to work for it. The highest Indian ideal is affluence absolutely without any work. The next best is some affluence but no work. The next is sufficiency with little or no work. And, the last is bare subsistence with little or no work. The rest is curse.

Since all human beings suffer from an irresistible lure to reach the ideal or to taste every now and then, surreptitiously or openly, the pleasures of the ideal life, all our fellow countrymen wherever the fate of their birth has placed them, continually persevere either to reach the ideal or to steal some pleasures of the blessed state. This is the urge unconsciously driving every Indian to finish his work, if he has to do it, somehow in a slipshod manner and in haste, and have his time for tea or gossip or just lazily drowsing. This applies to all from the lowest to highest, though the latter do not have to steal the pleasures of the happiest life. To them the pleasures rightfully belong by privilege of their birth and position.

The root of this Indian attitude to work goes far back into the distant past of the Hindu religious culture. No Hindu religious myth depicts gods as *working* immortal beings. The Bible has a god who worked for six days and the seventh day he rested.

The Hindu mythologies have Brahma, who *did not create the world*; the world just sprung out of his navel in an instant. All Hindu gods are depicted in the folk tales and folk paintings as resting eternally. Vishnu, the protector-god, is shown resting on the lotus floating on the water with his consort Lakshmi at his feet. Lord Shiva, the god of destruction, is shown to be eternally drowsy with *bhang*.

Thus, in the Hindu mind, the association of the notion of happiest life with life without work derives from the state of the gods themselves. When the gods have to take *avatars*, that is *reincarnate themselves as human beings with extraordinary powers* to destroy devils, they have taken birth as sons of kings, never of poor parents, which would have meant the necessity of working.

Even the great Hindu religious preachers down the ages, the great messiahs and reformers, have held aloft the ideal of "no-work" as the highest level of life. They have advocated for life

of contemplation, meditation of the *shashtras* and performance of the duties as laid down therein, but of no work to earn one's livelihood or to enrich social wealth. The only prescribed work is worship—the various forms and ways of worship. In the traditional orthodox Hindu sense, which is still current and subscribed to unquestioningly by the common people, work is not worship, but worship is work. Any other work is worthless or the curse which must be somehow borne under compulsion, formally and ritualistically.

Therefore, work in the Indians does not bring forth a sense of whole-hearted participation. This is as much true of the landless labourer who ploughs the land as of the skilled worker in an industrial complex, and as much true of the office clerk as of the top bureaucrats and business executives. There would, of course, be variation in the degree of manifestation of the belief in action, but the belief as such is universal among the Indians.

It may be pointed out that such an attitude to work as delineated above is the characteristic mark more of the Hindus than the other religious communities which live in India. So it undoubtedly is. But through the long course of history, other religious communities which came to India and settled in the land came to be as much influenced by the Hindus as the latter influenced the former.

The result is a peculiar assimilation of certain attitudes to and beliefs in non religious things. Hindus would not worship Allah nor Jesus for that matter. Nor would Muslims worship Rama and the Ganga or go to pray in the church. But they would be often indistinguishable in matters of dress, food-habits, civic behaviour and so on. They would be strikingly similar even in their notions of what makes a happy life apart from the religious context.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Christians or Muslims in India are easily distinguished from the Christians and Muslims outside India in that they have been *Indianized* through the centuries of Hindu influences.

This fact of history is nowhere else more glaringly in evidence as in the attitude to work. Originally, the fundamental Hindu attitude, the roots of which lie in the timeless *Uedas*, it was imbibed more or less by each community that

conquered India and came in close contact with the Hindus. In the case of the Muslims, the influence was more mutual than one-sided. The early Muslim invaders were marauders and, therefore, the question of influence does not arise.

The process of influence and counter-influence begins with the establishment of the Mughal Empire and deepens with the stabilization of the empire. Although the Mughals were great warriors, they were essentially lazy, luxury-loving—people given to pleasures of wine and woman. Work they regarded as a mean activity fit for the down-trodden and the lowly. Since they were the victors and rulers in India, their contempt for work became all the more accentuated and widespread.

Not only that the Emperor hated the very idea of work—and he would fill his court with only pleasure-loving people. The ideal seeped down to the people at the lowest level of the service of the empire. Even the village *patwari* was steadfast to the ideal embodied by the emperor and zealously upheld in his court. He made the poor villagers work like slaves for him, cook for him, wash his clothes, massage him, make his bed, prepare his *hookah* and drinks, and bring damsels for his pleasures, while the rich landlords gave him company in idle talks or games of cards and chess.

The upper class Hindus, the Brahmins and Rajputs, found confirmation of their traditional belief with regard to work in the lives of the empire-officers, not to mention the Emperor himself. They were the blessed ones, for they were absolutely free from the painful compulsion of having to work.

In imitation of their rulers, the upper caste Hindus too started making bonded labourers of the poor and low caste Hindus and freeing themselves from the rigour of toiling for worldly things. The Brahmins too, who had so long escaped work by being parasites on the Rajputs and also the Vaishyas, began acquiring worldly wealth mostly as gifts from the Rajput landlords or from the representative officers of the Mughal Empire and employing the low-caste poor Hindus as their servants to look after the work of cultivation and tending the cattle.

These low caste poor Hindus worked, resigned to their fate but also, in some cases willingly in the hope of soon

completing the term of punishment to work as determined by the sins they had committed in the previous birth and, then, attaining their freedom of no work. Thus at the upper level, the culture of the ruling Mughals and that of the ruled rich Hindus merged completely and thereby mutual influences on the wider level became easy.

That the assimilated Indian culture was not affected much under the British rule is not difficult to understand. The Britishers had an entirely different attitude to work, the one which was in sharp contrast to the indigenous Hindu-Muslim attitude to work. The British rulers at all levels, from the Viceroy down to the police-inspector worked like hell.

But, among other reasons what prevented the British attitude to work from influencing the Indian attitude was that the British rulers were extremely circumspect about coming into close contact with the natives except for political and administrative purposes. Besides, both Hindus and Muslims, at least in the first about 100 years of the British rule, withdrew themselves more and more into their own traditional shells of religious beliefs and rituals. They saw the British rulers in their administrative capacities and were overawed by the aura of the British Empire accompanying them. They did not see the hard work the Britishers did to establish the Empire and, then, to maintain it.

But, ironically enough, as the contact between the Britishers and the Indians became closer with the spread of English education and larger number of Indians joining government service, it was more the Indian attitude to work which influenced the British rulers than otherwise. Gradually, the Britishers in India tended to become authoritarian, luxurious yielding to the temptation of becoming rulers after the Indian image

So much so that the Britishers in India became quite different in demeanour from those in Britain. And when the Britishers, having lived in India for a few years, used to go back to Britain, they found it hard to adjust themselves in their own society.

Thus, despite the British rule and contact with the Christian culture, the Indian attitude to work continued intact and unimpaired in the essential sense. Apparently, however, the

spread of job oriented English education, the vast expansion of the government services, the growth of industries and the consequent creation of numerous jobs, made the Indians come to terms with the need of work—though only very gradually and never in the modern spirit

To them the daily hours of work measured by the clock in the offices and factories were completely unknown. Before the British rule, they worked leisurely, fitfully, resignedly, lazily, measuring time by the movement of the sun. And work meant mostly agricultural work, some mercantile work or work in the home industries which could be done at one's will.

Office work, factory-work, regularity of work, work measured in terms of daily output, work as daily routine—these, the creations of the British Raj, remained incomprehensible to the Indians for a long time and, perhaps, to most of them, still remain so.

But soon the process of Indianizing the Western, alien notion of work and the work-method set in. In fact, it accompanied the Indians' acceptance of work from the very beginning. They introduced slackness, laziness, evasiveness and even hostility to work during working hours. Since they could not but regard work—any kind of work, manual or mental—as punishment meted out to them by their fate, they had to try to evade it as far as they could.

But what made them take apparently more interest in the new kinds of work under the British rule was that every kind of work was paid for, which was certainly not the case ever before. "More work, more payment" lured them to work more. Surely not for the love of work, but for the love of money which, they thought, would one day free them from the drudgery of having to work. Those who worked in the government offices saved money to buy land in their villages so that they could be emancipated one day from their bondage to work.

Gradually, however, the educated Indians working in the various government offices came to realise that they could make extra money without necessarily working for it by intimidating the rich landlords, rich industrialists and merchants who craved for the government patronage. Thus was born the spiral of bribery and corruption straight from the traditional Indian cultural attitude to work, which has only gone on expanding since then.

To the British rulers, the growth of corruption in various forms did not matter much. In a way, it helped them to rule more strongly—and in peace. The corrupt officials were solid pillars of the Raj in India than the honest ones. The former were thorough going, obedient servants of the British empire and could be relied upon in quelling an uprising and carrying out the orders of the government. Besides, to preach the lessons of moral rectitude to Indians was not the responsibility of the foreign rulers, who had no intention of adopting India as their own country.

This was certainly the responsibility of the Indian leaders of the freedom movement. And, undoubtedly, they discharged this responsibility most enthusiastically. But, in the given circumstances, the preaching on moral rectitude, ironically, tended to produce more apathy to work than readiness to do it thoroughly. For, at that time, moral rectitude lay in acts of non-cooperation with the government and subversion of the whole machinery of the state.

The national leaders urged upon the workers in the British government as well as business establishments not to work faithfully, to go on strike, to stage *dharnas* and so on. Not only the workers but students and teachers, lawyers and office clerks, all were exhorted by the leaders to shirk work and join the freedom processions and raise slogans. Thus, in those days moral rectitude lay in rather not working than working. Those who joined the freedom movement had the satisfaction of having sacrificed their work for the national cause, but those who stayed on in the government offices developed, at least superficially, a feeling of guilt which they tried to overcome by shirking work and making more money.

All this determined the Indians' attitude to work in Free India. The traditional Hindu attitude got enriched with the Muslim influences, flourished under the British Raj and received further nourishment during the freedom movement. When India became free, the toughest job before the leadership was to inculcate into the mind of Indians the importance of work and make them take to work spontaneously and naturally.

Thirty years after Independence, it is still the toughest job before the leadership. But that it should be so is extremely unfortunate. It is a measure of the failure of the national

government to really induce and involve the people in tackling the various problems of social reconstruction

It must be understood clearly that no amount of slogan-mongering can be in any way effective in the endeavour of making people work. Slogans can be effective to a certain extent in a society where there is no psychological or cultural deterrent to the inclination to work. In the Indian society with such deep-seated, centuries old, traditional aversion to work, slogans are not likely to bring about even minor repercussions in the mind of the people

Under the circumstances, then, there are only two ways to make people work. One is the way of the totalitarian state. To force the people to work under threats of heavy punishment, imprisonment and death. The other is the way of the liberal-democratic state. To create such political, social, educational and economic conditions which by themselves will provide incentives and egg people on to work. In this case even exhortation and appeal to work will be rendered unnecessary, and people will be drawn to work of their own accord.

It has often been suggested that in a country like India where over 70 per cent people are still illiterate and pathetically tradition bound a certain amount of compulsion of the totalitarian type is necessary. In fact, Professor V K R V Rao at a meeting held in New Delhi recently, in his fervour, went to the extent of suggesting that in the proposed Amendments to the constitution "duty to work" should also be included among the Directive Principles. \*Such a suggestion is born of despair and undue anxiety. No miracle can occur from compulsion. Fortunately, Mr Swaran Singh, chairman of the meeting, politely declined to have anything to do with such a suggestion.

For work, any work, done under compulsion, can never produce anything of real value either for the worker or for his society.

As Wilhelm von Humboldt says in his celebrated book, *The Limits of State Action*,

"Whatever does not spring from a man's free choice, or only the result of instruction and guidance, does not enter

This was however not accepted by the then Government and therefore, not included in the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution

into his very being, but still remains alien to his true nature; he does not perform it with truly human energies, but merely with mechanical exactness."

Any totalitarian state is a proof this statement.

In India, the task of making people work in the liberal democratic way is, of course, not easy. But, fortunately, after the herculean efforts of Jawaharlal Nehru in the one-and-a-half decades after Independence to lay the foundation of the modernized society, the task should not appear to be unsurmountable. What is required is to build further on that foundation.

What is required is to encourage more and more of modern education with liberal-scientific-humanistic outlook and technological bias, encourage more and more of heavy industrialization which is bound to breed small-scale industries ranging from the urban to the rural areas and thereby generate almost unending job-opportunities, and give a full boost to free commercial activities.

In other words, what is required is full-scale and all-round modernization of the Indian society, which will overcome the traditional cultural-psychological impediment to work on the one hand, and induce the people to work, on the other. The new emergent social values, modernization of the psychological attitudes and the economic affluence are bound to inspire them to work voluntarily and whole-heartedly.

Part modernization and part Indianization in either the educational or the economic system is bound to add to the prevailing confusion in these spheres which, in turn, is only bound to lead to the retarding of the motive to work. In such a situation, ultimately, the traditional attitude to work reasserts itself with greater force over the modern attitude inherent in the education received at the school and the college.

Unfortunately, modernity in India has come to be commonly associated with affluence. As a result of it while modernity prevails to an extent in the upper-class society, it is not to be found in the lower-middle and poor sections of the society. And, consequently, therefore, modernity at the top tends to be distortion or corruption of true modernity for true modernity is possible only when the entire social system is modernized.

Illustrations of the distortion or corruption of modernity



are evident everywhere in our educational, social and economic structures. We have modern educational system without modern educational facilities. When it comes to providing facilities, the Indian cultural-traditional thinking is evoked. In the industrial establishments, while modernity exists at the managerial-executive level, the working and living conditions of the workers are far from modern with the result that they lose an urge to work whole-heartedly. At this level material and psychological incentives are utterly lacking.

At the college and university level of education such distortions and discrepancies are to be seen everywhere in the syllabus, teaching methods, examination system, working and living conditions of teachers and students, and the so-called extra-curricular activities.

Only in a wholly modern society with proliferation of modern educational, social, economic and cultural institutions, work is, and can be, a pleasure to which people are willingly and happily drawn. In such a situation the possibility of enforcing compulsion is automatically reduced to the minimum. Work, then, becomes meaningful and brings the best out of every man and every woman.

## *TWELVE*

### DISCIPLINE AND THE HINDU CULTURE

Discipline is one of those magical words the spell of which still enthralls the masses almost everywhere. In fact, for the leaders and the rulers anywhere in the world, nothing is so reliable a weapon to quieten the masses or to rouse them to some pre determined action as wielding the wand of discipline. Discipline is not merely the concern of the political leaders and government rulers. Religious reformers, cultural harbingers, educational authorities, class room teachers, parents and guardians, all of them are deeply concerned with the maintenance of discipline in their own spheres of operation.

So strong is the grip or the spell of the word that those on whom it is cast cannot even retain their senses to ask either their masters or themselves "What is actually this thing called Discipline?" Even if they, in case, retain their senses, they would not in all probability want to know the meaning of the word. For they think they know the meaning, and, of course, in a sense they do.

They know the meaning that has formed itself in their mind both consciously and unconsciously since their infancy, and through childhood, youth and afterwards. The meaning has been drivenhome to them by the slaps of the chagrined father, the boxing of ears by the school teachers, the threatening words of the religious priests, the punitive fines imposed in the college on the university and so on.

Can there be any meaning of discipline apart from a complete submission to a set of rules framed by the authorities at home or in the society? No, certainly not for the masses. Nor, certainly, for those who happen to be in position to frame rules for others to follow.

According to Webster's *New World Dictionary*, there are six meanings of the word, "Discipline" They are 1 A branch of knowledge and learning, 2 Training that develops self control, character or orderliness and efficiency, 3 The result of such training, self control orderly conduct, 4 Acceptance of or submission to authority and control, 5 A system of rules or methods, as for the conduct of members of a monastic order, and 6 Treatment that corrects or punishes

Now, which of the meanings does the authority in a family or in a social institution or in a government imply normally when it appeals for and enforces the maintenance of discipline among the people who happen to be under its control? The answer is very clear The last three meanings of those listed above (Nos 4, 5 and 6) The first three meanings are, of course, original meanings of the word, but are now certainly gone completely out of date, except in academic exercises and philosophical discourses

When a disciplinary father asks his child to behave in a disciplined manner, he means that his child should unquestioningly submit to his authority and control and obey the rules framed by him Otherwise the child will have to be subjected to corrective treatment This is equally true of religious authority and its followers and governmental authority and the people over whom it exercises control

All authorities in this respect are of the same nature Since governmental authority is the most powerful of all other authorities it reigns supreme as the most powerful instrument for maintaining discipline It also decides for all others what is to be regarded as discipline and what not and frames a system of rules by following which discipline could be maintained

In the Middle Ages this was the prerogative of religious authority In modern times, the prerogative lies in the hands of the political authority Nevertheless the common interest of both the apex authorities remain the same to condition human beings from their very infancy to make them voluntarily submit themselves to authority and control and to compel the "indisciplined" in all possible ways to do the same

In the Western liberal society, however, the other meanings of discipline—those listed under Nos 1, 2 and 3 have always been prevalent, alongside the meanings under 4, 5 and 6 In

the course of the development of civilization, the first three meanings have been universally accepted as legitimate and proper. At times, since the seventeenth century, religious-spiritual revolution brought about by Calvin and Luther when the meanings under Nos. 1, 2 and 3 came to be accepted, there have been occasions when the selfish political and religious leaders tried to revive the meanings under Nos. 4, 5 and 6, but, ultimately, they failed. The progress of the Western civilization can be measured in terms of the degree of emancipation from the authoritarian discipline.

The distinction between the two sets of the meanings can be put quite briefly. The first set describes "discipline" as an inner self-control with a view to developing one's talents and efficiency in work. The other set makes "discipline" a matter of external behaviour and gesture which may be divorced from the inner experience.

Before Calvin and Luther, religious discipline in Christian Europe meant merely observance of the various rituals of the Roman Catholic Church. A disciplined Christian was one who went to the Church on Sundays, participated in the communion, paid his subscriptions to the Church, said prayers before meals and before going to sleep, obeyed the priest's orders and so on. He must confess, atone, celebrate festivals and marry according to the church laws. Calvin and Luther rejected the rituals and stressed that the true Christian discipline was cultivation of inner virtues.

It must, however, be admitted that in Christianity discipline was never understood or accepted as solely observance of the rituals. That it is something to be cultivated essentially in the soul as a spiritual need has always been emphasized. Jesus himself placed the Kingdom of God in that man's soul who has developed through discipline an understanding of the divine mystery.

In the Hindu religion, on the contrary, discipline has always been associated with the external aspects of man that is observance of the prescribed rituals and rules. A disciplined Hindu gets up before sunrise, touches the feet of his parents, attends the call of nature, takes bath, goes to temple to worship, puts *chandan tilak* on his forehead, takes vegetarian meals, refrains from smoking and drinking and goes to bed early in the evening.

This idea of discipline has been among the Hindus since ancient times and is still practised in the villages and suburban and provincial towns. Even in the big cities by and large, the same idea of discipline prevails. The *tilak* on the forehead is taken for a mark of goodness while smoking and drinking are considered to be attributes of indiscipline.

It must be pointed out here that discipline basically derives its relevance from society from individuals living in a society. The question of discipline or indiscipline would not arise if men were living separately each one by himself in a separate jungle. The need of discipline arises only in society where men live together in small or large groups. Members of a society are required to be disciplined individually in the sense of self control not only because that is the only way to realise one's intellectual and spiritual gifts but also because this enriches the society continually. In fact no intellectual and spiritual gifts can be realised apart from the society.

This being so it is not surprising that discipline as cultivation of inner self-control with a view to realising one's talents and gifts has not been practised in the Hindu society. True there is also a Hindu view of self control but its objective is quite different to attain salvation of the individual soul from the cycle of birth and death. This objective negates society and for the purpose of discipline makes the individual responsible neither to his own self nor to the society. It binds him to the mythical fancy of the emancipation of the individual soul.

For this purpose he should observe all the rituals and rules prescribed by the *Vedas* and the *Karmakanda* and other scriptures. Quite many of the rituals and rules which good disciplined Hindus follow are in fact mentioned in no scriptures. They were devised by some greedy priests and have come down orally from ancient times to the Hindus of today. This has made it easy for the Hindus to practise discipline externally without having cultivated it innerly.

Externally it involves only blind adherence to given rules and observance of the prescribed rituals. The rules are related to such superficial external things as dress food, reading material occupation and so on while specific rituals are prescribed and must be observed on the occasions of birth sacred thread ceremony, marriage and death.

It would appear that in the Hindu society, discipline is allied to religion and, therefore, a disciplined man is also a religious man. Or *vice versa* a religious man is also a disciplined man. It is undoubtedly so. In fact, the Hindus have never had any notion of discipline, as we understand it today, apart from religious discipline.

Hindu thought has never taken into account man in society but only man in relation to the salvation of his individual soul. Even the most rigorous religious discipline like the *yoga* is not designed to turn a man into a better citizen and a better social being, but keep him exclusively concerned with disciplining his his own body in isolation so that the soul could be emancipated through understanding.

Therefore, Hindus cannot understand the modern concept of discipline which aims at making a man a better man in the society. Discipline in this sense is a means to the ultimate enrichment of both the individual and the society. And, in this sense, discipline has nothing to do with what one wears and eats or whether one drinks or smokes or whether one observes religious rituals or submits unquestioningly to any external authority, social or political.

Discipline, as we understand it today, is actually voluntary self-control of one's passions with a view to channelizing the intellectual and emotional energy so preserved to the realization of one's creative potentiality. This is, of course, the highest a disciplined man aims at. At the common level, discipline is the cultivation of a sense of equality among and respect for all normal men. It is the cultivation of a sense of recognition of freedom of all men, of one's own and every one else's, which is based upon the time tested fact that the best in man can be drawn out in freedom alone.

Thus, to question authority is not an act of indiscipline. On the contrary, it is true discipline. For, it is apparent that the indisciplined cannot put pertinent and disturbing questions. He who questions the validity of the existing order of things with a view to finding a justification of it is certainly more disciplined than the other who accepts everything uncritically and submits to it thoughtlessly.

Even defiance can be an act of discipline. At some critical moments, it can, in fact, be the greatest act of discipline.

Jawaharlal Nehru's defiance of his father, Motilal Nehru, over matters of political strategy was an act of discipline rather than indiscipline. Mahatma Gandhi's defiance of the British rule was born of and sustained by his exemplary discipline. Bertrand Russell's defiance of his own government over its nuclear weapon policy was also a great act of discipline born of long cultivated intellectual conviction, self-control and concern for entire mankind.

This interpretation of discipline will certainly be difficult for most of us to accept. For, by discipline we have always meant total submission to authority and not questioning the authority as regards the validity and rationale of the rules it has framed.

True enough, total and unquestioning obedience to rules and regulations is the mark of a disciplined school-boy and a disciplined soldier in the army. We must never confuse between the discipline in the army and discipline in civil life. While in the army unquestioning obedience to the given command is a virtue, in civil life it may be otherwise. What is discipline in one walk of life may not be the same in the other. Each profession, each vocation, develops its own discipline.

In fact each man at different stages of his life may exercise different kinds of discipline and one kind of discipline may be harmful for another stage when another kind will be more fruitful. Imagine a grown up man observing the discipline which he observed as a schoolboy. And imagine the army-discipline to be the rule in civil life! But, ironically, when any authoritarian and totalitarian regime gives a call for discipline in national life, it is the army discipline that is meant with the officials acting as commanders of various ranks and the general people behaving as soldiers executing the given orders.

Such a situation might make a nation militarily strong, but it is bound to result in its intellectual, cultural and artistic degeneration. And, eventually, it might lead to the nation's destruction too. No nation can exist for long, let alone flourish, on the foundation of military discipline alone. A nation's vital strength ultimately lies in its institutions designed to hold the balance between the forces of change on one hand and the forces favouring stability on the other.

It is apparent that if by discipline is meant army discipline or school discipline, discipline cannot make a nation great, though, of course, much depends upon what is meant by "a great nation"

Whether post 1917 Russia with the introduction of army discipline in civic life is a great nation or pre-1917 Russia with voluntary discipline was a great nation can be answered in accordance with one's idea of what makes a nation great. No doubt, militarily it is great—as great as America. It could be equally great in science and technology, particularly war oriented science and technology. But where is even a tenth rate Gogol in Russia today? Perhaps Pasternak was one, and Solzhenitsyn another. But both had to defy the army discipline and act in accordance with the light obtained from voluntary discipline.

It may sound sacrilegious but history has instances of the fact that discipline—army type discipline—tends to make a nation essentially small and sterile, though superficially and on the surface it may appear strong. A strictly disciplined society cannot retain its integrity and cohesion for long let alone its prosperity and intellectual creativity. Examples of totalitarian societies are there for any one to see.

But look at the two liberal societies British and American. The British society has been comparatively more disciplined and more conservative than the American and, therefore, to that extent, more prone to intellectual and artistic degeneration than the other. At best, discipline of the army kind may be a help for a time but in the long run it can only be a hindrance.

In our Indian society dominated by the Hindu ethos people have not yet imbibed the modern spirit of the sense of discipline. Used for hundreds of generations to regarding and practising discipline as a set of rules to be followed blindly, they cannot easily take to their heart that discipline is a voluntary restraint of passions. They do not feel an inner need of discipline which is basically social in character, for their inner need is fundamentally *a social* if not anti social, isolated from the society.

Since they do not by themselves feel an inner need to cultivate discipline in personal and social life, they can understand



it only in terms of the external rules or orders to be followed. For example, in pursuance of the disciplinary code, a clerk will come to the office punctually allright, but he may not feel an urge to work carefully and diligently at his table. He may pass his time chatting, gossiping or doodling or reading cheap, sentimental, sex crime stuff.

With variations, the same is true of most of us Indians in almost all walks of life, from the lowest to the highest. Discipline to us means conformity to rules laid down by the authorities. It means submission to them and no more and less. The same kind of discipline prevails at home. The head of the family expects complete obeisance from the members of his family in respect of external behaviour. As long as they do not eat what he has forbidden, do not wear clothes he does not approve of, do not sleep till late hours in the morning, do not keep awake after nine at night, do not refuse to marry in accordance with the father's choice and arrangement, they earn the credit for being disciplined.

It is evident that the dull headed members of a family are more inclined to conform to this discipline than the intelligent and talented ones. The latter too are, however, incapacitated by a sort of dichotomy created in them by the opposite pulls of the demand of the discipline and of the inner urge to revolt.

In such a cultural situation, a call for national discipline is likely to be totally misunderstood. While the call actually urges the people to develop a sense of inner discipline, to understand that a truly cohesive and creative society cannot emerge without its members becoming responsible to themselves and their society, the responsibilities essentially being one, the people might as, actually, they have become disciplined in the superficial external behaviour only.

Discipline is a means to an end—the end being the development of both intellectual and manual powers so as to acquire greater efficiency. This is the reality. The other idea of discipline as submission to a set of rules is a myth kept alive by the power seekers all over the world.

## THIRTEEN

### MODERN ACADEMICS IN THE TRADITIONAL SOCIETY

#### A Study of Delhi University Teachers

Very frequently, the blame for the appalling fall in the general educational standard in Indian universities and colleges is apportioned in large measure to the teachers of these institutions. But, more often than not, this attitude is born of facile understanding of the entire situation. Sometimes, it is the product of a concealed sense of self righteousness. In some other cases, it ensues from a genuine feeling of despair caused by the frustration of high expectations from the members of the teaching community. This happens when the university and college teachers are looked upon as ideal, angelic, persons like the ancient *gurus* and they turn out to be no different from the *ordinary men of clay*, clamouring for higher salary grades, better service conditions and a fair share in the educational administration, shirking from discharging their duties and indulging in cheap politics.

A better and more helpful way of understanding the problem would be to begin with accepting that the university and college teachers are really men of clay and as much subject to vices and virtues as other educated members of the society. It would be of help to remember that university and college teaching is one of the many professions available in the modern society, and those who choose to join it do so in accordance with various considerations such as personal predilection, salary grade, availability of jobs and so on.

It would be absurd if a college or a university teacher tries to behave like a *guru* of the ancient times. Indeed, in the modern higher educational institution he would either be a pathetic joker or a lamentable impediment to the growth of modern knowledge.

This is, however, not to absolve the members of the modern academic community from sharing the responsibility of the degeneration of the general educational standard. But the wrong does not lie in the fact that they are not angels, but in the fact that they are not human enough to be aware of their intellectual and social responsibilities and to develop a will to fulfil them to the best of their abilities.

Once we look at the problem from this perspective, we begin to perceive the reason why teachers of higher education have not lived up to the expectations of the society. And the reason would seem to lie not so much in the teachers as in the society of which they are the product. But, of course, the society itself—particularly in the developing societies of Asia and Africa,—is subject to change under the impact of modern knowledge disseminated by teachers of higher education.

It is important to note that the educational standard in India started falling after attainment of Independence. Ideally speaking, it is rather surprising, for after Independence, the standard should have gone up, as it has happened in many newly emerged African countries. But, in India, since 1947 there has been a consistent downfall in the general educational standard.

Some of the reasons ascribed to this phenomenon are well known: the eternal language tangle, non availability of adequate resources for higher education, lack of job opportunities, programme of mass higher education under political pressure, and of course, decay of the moral sense in teachers.

But what is not generally recognized is that most of these causes are themselves the result of one underlying socio cultural phenomenon. The inner resistance of the traditional Indian culture to modern knowledge and modern social and educational institutions. So long as these institutions were run on a limited scale and for limited purposes by the Britishers, they thrived and flourished. After Independence, however under political pressures, traditional cultural elements came to be revived often in deceptively modern garb, and vitiated the functioning of those institutions.

Consequently, the good that might have accrued from the functioning of the modern institutions was not there and they became, by and large, victims of petty squabbles, dirty politicking, gossip-mongering, sloth, ineptitude and so on.

This essentially is the reason behind the mess that our educational institutions, particularly, those of higher learning, have been reduced to. An example of how the traditional Indian culture continues to affect the character of our modern educationists is provided by the broadly recognized fact of our educationists habitually paying court to the politicians in power and implicitly or explicitly taking orders from them. Most Vice-Chancellors, professors, let alone others, willingly play the role of stooges of the ministers and even government departmental secretaries for petty favours.

The readiness with which our academic intellectuals play this role is clearly derived from the deeply rooted cultural attitude of regarding the ruler (howsoever he may have come to power) above law and gain his favour by serving him well. Respect for the rule of law is a basic attitude of modern mind, whereas the traditional cultural pull is towards respect and obedience to rule of person, thereby vitiating the whole functioning of modern institutions.

Higher educational institutions are the worst victims of this peculiar cultural phenomenon in India. Here, the very basic assumption that knowledge can be achieved through free rational inquiry is incomprehensible to Indian students and teachers in general assembled at the institutions of higher learning. They gather there not for knowledge as such, but for other things.

Teachers are interested in retaining their jobs, ensuring their promotions, gaining favours of bosses, not through attaining excellence in acquiring and disseminating knowledge (which would have been the modern way of functioning) but through purely non-academic activities which pay higher dividends in our traditional society.

Students are, in general, the least concerned with gathering knowledge, which requires patience, diligence and free, intelligent, attitude to things. To both the teachers and students, the continuance of the old Macaulian systems of teaching and examination suit best and they dilute instinctively any innovations, which are sometimes sought to be introduced in the educational pattern.

A very brief description of the Delhi University intellectuals would illustrate some of their typical characteristics, which

could be found to be true of all Indian academic intellectuals. The Delhi University is now a huge academic institution comprising of 65 affiliated colleges, apart from its own constituent post-graduate departments. Over 5,300 teachers and 1,40,000 students constitute the academic community of this University.

The University has grown to this enormous size after it became one of the central universities in 1948 and, more particularly, in the last about one and a half decades. Behind this expansion, there has been no educational philosophy or policy. It has been determined more by political exigencies than genuinely realised needs of higher education. Consequently, the expansion has been totally in terms of numbers—more colleges, more students, more teachers and so on.

In this craze for expansion of higher education, the quality of teaching and research has been naturally the worst victim. In an effort to appease the largest number of young people, and through them, their parents and relations, political pressures have been continuously but indirectly put on the academicians of the University to simplify the courses of study and lower the standard of evaluation of examination papers. And the academicians have never resisted any such pressures. If anything, they have been often only too eager to oblige the political authorities.

Some of the typical professional as well as personal characteristics (it is significant that even the latter lend themselves easily to generalizations) of Delhi University academic intellectuals would be of help in understanding their way of functioning. These characteristics, by and large, are to be found in teachers of other Indian universities too.

First the majority of those who have joined Delhi University as teachers in various grades have not done so for love of teaching and scholarly work. The primary and the sole incentive is to earn bread and butter. Teaching at a college or an university is just another job, but easier, more comfortable than others, requiring no special skill or aptitude except an M.A. degree, and offering nearly the same scale of pay as the Indian Administrative Service, though with much less opportunities for promotion.

Yet the better ones choose the latter which brings them power with attendant gratifications. Failing that, they try

business houses, banks and firms. Higher educational service is their last resort and where they remain unwilling souls, still dreaming of power and easy money and manipulating to realize their dreams through the backdoor.

The case of women teachers, constituting over 40 per cent of Delhi University and college teachers, is still more interesting. About 90 per cent of the women academic teachers have joined to earn additional income for their families. Since the work at the college or university is the least demanding, they easily combine their profession with house keeping. With few exceptions, all of them belong to well-to-do homes and most of them are wives or daughters of businessmen, business executives, rich traders, high government officials and the urban elite. A few who do not are also guided by the same values to which the others subscribe.

A significant common feature of them all is their strong link with the native religious, social and cultural traditions which are completely at variance with the intellectual profession they have happened to join.

Almost all of them observe religious rituals and family customs, which are basically still tribal in nature. Some do with full faith in them, some mechanically, while some continue to observe them for the fear of spoiling their family and social prestige. These rituals and customs are not confined to special occasions like birth, death, marriage, *mundan* and *upanayana* ceremonies, but are part of weekly, even daily, routine. Observing fasts, for example, or not taking salt or sour dishes on certain prescribed days, is even now not an uncommon practice among the Delhi academic intellectuals, more particularly the women members.

In the college and university staff rooms, these and other personal problems are more frequently, at times, and even *loudly discussed than the academic problems*. Among other personal problems, the most recurring ones are personal income-tax, constructing houses for personal occupation or renting them out, education and illness of children, gains to be made from revision of pay scales or additional dearness allowance and so on.

When the conversation shifts to impersonal subjects, the frequent topics are the Principal's or Vice-Chancellor's manner

of functioning, political personalities, Hindi films (the theatre never), the Delhi University Teachers' Association affairs, the spicy news of the day, the rising cost of living, and, ironically enough, the decline in the educational standards

Politics is the common theme of them all, and, at times, conversations turns into discussion, discussion into passionate arguments, and, finally, into exchange of threats and abuses

Among the women teachers however, politics is generally a taboo. They have their cookery recipes, flowers, dogs, dress-designs, slimming diets, etc., to talk about. They do not hold any opinions on political, social, and economic issues and are guided solely by the words of those who wield authority

The second characteristic relates to the nature of work that these academic intellectuals are required to do in their institutions. A Lecturer, who stands at the lowest rung of the academic ladder of distinctions, takes 16-18 classes per week. A Reader, a step higher, takes 4-6 classes, sometimes even less, and a Professor, 2-3 classes or even less.

Since the students are totally undemanding and the examination system continues to be essentially the same as it was a 100 years ago, taking a class for a college and university teacher of any category does not mean anything more than the mere physical exertion involved in the sitting or standing and speaking. Tutorial and seminar work is sheer formality like lecture work. Students even at the post graduate level copy things from cheap, *bazaar* notes, which are available in plenty, and their experience is that these notes help them pass their B.A. and M.A. examinations with good marks more easily than the lectures delivered in the class-rooms. The teachers are aware of this and they work with a pathetic feeling of being redundant.

For promotion to higher grades, all that is required is a research degree, preferably from a foreign university, plus connections and the favour of the bosses. Of course, laudable rules governing promotions have been laid down, but more often than not, they are flouted or interpreted so as to suit the favourite candidates.

For example, a condition like "evidence of fruitful intellectual activity", has often been deemed to have been satisfied by an article in the college magazine or contributions to the 'letters to the editor' column in the daily papers.

While the rule lays down that the minimum qualifications for appointment to the post of a Reader are: a high second class M.A. with at least five years of post-graduate teaching experience plus a Ph.D. degree or equivalent published work, the post has sometimes been filled with a person having not even a year's teaching experience, let alone having a Ph.D. degree.

There is also a strange case of a certain person who, having been rejected twice for the Reader's post, was, after a few years appointed as a Professor.

On close investigation, cases of such omissions and commissions would be discovered in a frighteningly large number. What is often flouted is not the legal formality, but the spirit of modern education, the spirit of free inquiry and quest for knowledge, which flourishes only in a just social order and healthy academic climate.

Is it any wonder, that in the circumstances no university department has a journal of its own? Or, that the standard of a college magazine hardly ever rises beyond the level of puerile writing?

Thus, free from the requirement of doing homework for class lectures, free from the obligation of attaining academic excellence through publications for the purpose of promotion and privileges and deriving no personal satisfaction from the pursuit of modern knowledge, Delhi University teachers have all the time in the world for gossiping and politicking. This is why the Delhi University Teachers Association (DUTA), which could have taken the lead in the educational reform programmes and the creation of a better academic climate in the university and colleges, has limited itself largely to trade union activities.

Naturally, like any other trade union body, the DUTA has been a hot-bed of politics. Almost all national political parties have their teacher-leaders on the DUTA executive and other committees.

Often, the DUTA elections are fought on the basis of political ideologies rather than academic and educational problems, though beneath the surface, in general, self-gratification and self-promotion remain the prime motives behind the activists' plans.

And these motives are there because, more often than not, they are realized. The authorities of the University are always



out to appease the DUTA leaders, especially the Executive members by offering or promising to offer them lucrative posts. Could it be an accident in every case that most DUTA Presidents and Secretaries and vocal Executive members have become, without having to face proper competition, College Principals, University Readers and high grade University officials?

Call it "favouritism", call it "nepotism", call it whatever you like, but this is the inevitable consequence of having modern educational institutions in a society which is still wholly governed by the traditional values.

The University and College teachers are members of this society first, and only then, teachers of modern knowledge. Their conduct is conditioned, consciously or unconsciously, by their awareness that the knowledge they try to impart in the class rooms to their students is the product of alien societies and, therefore, more immediately relevant there than in their own wholly tradition bound society.

Even the language of learning and scholarship is English, an alien language, which the Indian academicians of various disciplines at best can only use functionally all right, but which they can never use creatively.

Thus both the knowledge and the medium of knowledge are foreign and the teachers use them in performance of their duties mechanically, monotonously and, to that extent, meaninglessly.

In such circumstances, superficialities like degrees, particularly foreign degrees positions, particularly involving administrative work, influence, particularly political through DUTA, prestige, particularly earned through family connections, and pelf, naturally, come to matter more to the teachers than dissemination and advancement of modern knowledge.

## FOURTEEN

### THE DANGER OF THE CALL FOR INDIANIZATION TODAY

Indianization of the Indian educational and cultural life is apparently on the move today. English medium public schools are looked upon officially as bastions of Western culture and are falling from grace. In Punjab and Andhra, public schools have reportedly been banned. Similar moves in other states are likely to follow. Folk art, folk theatre, folk music, folk sports, folk athletics are being apotheosized and patronized. Educational curricula both at school and college levels are said to be undergoing revision with a view to pruning out the Western elements and injecting heavy doses of Indian ones. The Delhi University, taking the lead in this direction, is reported to be planning to institute a Department of spiritual and moral values to instil into the minds of both the teachers and the students, suspected to be too much Westernized, a sense of the rich spiritual and cultural glory of India, which they are said to have totally lost.

Thus, after about a century or so, history in India seems to be repeating itself. True, we have no Vivekanandas, nor Bal Gangadhar Tilaks. But we too have our voices, both saintly and secular, pleading for Indianization as against Westernization.

But there is, of course, a tremendous difference between then and now. Then, India was under British rule, which had by that time wholly consolidated itself under one administrative and judicial set up throughout the country. The call for Indianization was in effect a call for national freedom, for throwing off the spreading Western influence and for reawakening Indian's faith in action. And, eventually, the movement for Indianization played not an insignificant part, under Gandhi's leadership, in bringing independence to the country.

Today, the situation is completely changed. Politically, we have been free now for about 30 years, and today we, as a nation, are a power to reckon with in the world affairs. The foundations for an agriculturally and industrially advanced India were firmly laid soon after the attainment of freedom under the inspiring leadership of the great Jawaharlal Nehru, the benefits from which have started flowing now. Again, for 30 years, significant social, educational and cultural transformations have been taking place throughout the length and breadth of the country. Old barriers are breaking. Traditional foggy values have started tumbling, giving way to the acquiring of the Western outlook and values, thus paving the way for rapid economic progress.

The past 30 years have been a period of transition—the transition from a tradition-bound, moribund, stagnating society to an advanced society bent on acquiring the science-and-technology based modern culture. In a nation wedded to democratic way of functioning, 30 years do not constitute a long transitional period. Nor is it a surprise that a good deal of superficialities have often passed for realities.

Nevertheless, by and large, it is evident with more and more industrialization, increasing mechanization of farming, modernization of the defence services and the administrative and law-and-order machinery, that the nation's progress has been unmistakably in the direction of what is loosely called Westernization.

Whenever, for example, reforms—if we may use the word in this context—have been introduced in the educational system, they have been more on the Western educational pattern than on the Indian pattern. Our communications, business methods, entertainment media, notions of sophistication, etc., have all been fashioned on Western models.

All this has only been natural, the logical consequence of the kind of foundations laid for the nation's future by Nehru. Beneath the surface slogan-mongering, fashionable protests and equally fashionable counter-protests, the Westernization of the Indian society, may be superficial at first in the first generation, and is bound to become real afterwards, in the next generation. This process has been going on uninterruptedly, albeit very slowly, for the last 30 years, prompted and conditioned

by the Western socio economic pattern adopted in the country

Is the contemporary craze for Indianization merely another phase of slogan mongering? Unfortunately, it does not appear to be so. The craze has affected various aspects and levels of Indian educational and cultural life. Both official and unofficial organizations appear to be vying with each other in implementing their declared policy of Indianization, whatever the term means to them.

What does the term *Indianization* really mean? There can be no easy and definitive answer to this question. For, unlike the Western countries India is a land of many religions and many nationalities. But, on what basis would the process of Indianization proceed?

Of course, a Punjabi must regard a Bengali or a Madrasí as much an Indian as he does himself. This he knows very well, as does a Bengali or a Madrasí. But when he is asked to become more Indian, a Punjabi becomes more Punjabi, a Bengali more Bengali and a Madrasí more Madrasí.

When they become so, even ordinary communication among them becomes impossible, unless, of course, they become "Westernized" and are able to converse in English. In the other spheres of life too—religious, social and cultural—near total incommunicability will tend to occur, unless they become again "Westernized" and begin to subscribe to views and values not rooted in their separate sectarian rituals.

In any case, what is the common feature among them all is a backward-looking, retrograde and anti modern turn in their outlook. This is going to create a peculiar cultural confusion in the country leading to a pathetic state of further alienation of the masses from the main currents of national life, which are, and will ever remain, predominantly, if not wholly, "Western" in character. In the circumstances, the masses will forever, remain imitators and followers of the few administrators, political and business elites, technocrats and scientists, writers and artists. The masses will never be made to experience the self generated urge and the initiative for controlling the environment and participating whole heartedly in the nation-building programmes, so indispensable a condition for healthy social development.

For, let us boldly accept the bitter truth, which is that whatever Indianization might mean in precept, in practice, it means obscurantism, anachronism and staggering incompatibility with the accepted and fast developing industrial and socio-economic patterns in the country.

It is significant that the demand for Indianization is limited to those sectors of society which do not constitute its core structures, those which vitally affect and determine the economic prospects and the way of life. For example, there can be no Indianization of the vast technology India is using. All of it still comes from the West. Can the highly specialized tasks of managing big industrial houses be Indianized? Certainly not. The past of India may be rich in philosophical speculation, but it cannot be a guide to either the present or the future.

Again, can the scientific and the technological education in India be Indianized? The question does not arise. Had India contributed something of its own to the world science and technology, the question would perhaps have been relevant. But not in the prevailing situation.

Perhaps, there is a scope for Indianizing the liberal arts curricula, but even here the scope is pitifully limited. India's contribution to modern social sciences and the humanities is extremely negligible. In Political Science, in Economics, even in Philosophy, the University syllabi in India hardly contain any Indian name. Not because some names that deserve to be there are not there, but because there are no names fit enough to be placed among the modern thinkers.

Modern knowledge, in both the realms of natural as well as social sciences, is based on systematic and logical reasoning, and the traditional Indian thinking has been characteristically deficient in this faculty of mind. It has been rich in imaginative flights and intuitive speculations but not in constructing a body of systematic, logical, verifiable ideas and thought, which has ushered in modern civilization and culture. In the circumstances, if we force Indianization on the liberal arts curricula, we shall only succeed in rendering the young minds unfit for the kind of life awaiting them after the completion of their University education.

Indianization in the world of journalism, for which the demand is often voiced, can mean nothing except ridiculous

retrogression, if the prevailing state of affairs is taken into account. A revealing idea of this can be easily obtained by comparing any day an English newspaper, said to be "Westernized" in its way of functioning, and a regional language newspaper, preferably Hindi, as a sample of a purely Indian newspaper. While an English paper, however small, presents news and views with an analytical slant, the Hindi paper, however big, does it in a totally unanalytical manner.

Even in the choice of news there is a marked difference. A Hindi paper selects news of *totally unintellectual* character, such as news of *kirtan*, *satsang*, *Bhagawatt jagran* and so on, and carries articles on big and small religious rituals and traditional customs and would have nothing to do with reporting of intellectual and cultural meetings. Reviews of music concerts, theatre performances, painting exhibitions, etc., find no place in a Hindi paper, while an English paper covers them almost regularly. A Hindi paper tends more to appeal to baser emotions like chauvinism and blind folded self-glorification than man's higher faculties like reason and logic.

The comparison can go on at greater length, but even the brief one made above is enough to indicate the direction in which Indianization can lead Indian journalism. But, hopefully, such a kind of Indianization of English journalism is not possible, because it is closely linked up with the main streams of contemporary intellectual, economic, social and political life of not only the country but the whole world.

Again in the world of literature and arts, the call for Indianization will only encourage works of nostalgia for the vague and mythical glory of India's past which is hardly relevant to India of either today or tomorrow. A specimen of the revival of folk theatre is the Punjabi plays performed at Sapru House in Delhi. When, however, more sophisticated folk plays like Mr. Habib Tanvir's are staged, the auditorium goes generally empty. And it is not surprising, since our folk art cannot bear sophistication.

Our folk literature and folk art have only two predominant subjects: sex and religion, and fairly subtle variations on the admixture of the two. Krishna and Radha are the archetypal hero and heroine celebrated in all Indian arts: literature, music and dance. And these two eternal subjects are treated with

man's whole attitude to himself and the world, his beliefs, his values, his spiritual (in the non-religious sense of the term) being. It is a painful process—the transition from traditionalism to modernism but a nation such as India must pass through it before it can take a big leap into the future prosperity and attain the joy of generating knowledge.

But, certainly, this cannot happen until we give up our backward looking cry for Indianization and work zealously for creating proper economic, political, educational and cultural conditions conducive to modernization on a much wider and liberal basis than at present. By *limiting modernization only to industrial and business world and to a small elite section of the vast and variegated Indian society to which we prescribe Indianization*, neither the one nor the other will be genuine and fruitful.

Let total modernization of the entire Indian society—rural or urban—be our ultimate goal, towards which we must proceed steadily and perseveringly. For modernization is the one sure and complete answer to India's multifarious problems.

and sentiments. To this category belong such novels as Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, Aldous Huxley's *Those Barren Leaves* and George Orwell's *1984*. And to the extent that the intellect in these works has been allowed to keep emotion out instead of allowing the two to blend together, they have failed to attain the heights of great literature. For great literature excludes nothing and includes everything, no matter how disparate and contradictory the things are otherwise in the normal state.

It is in this context that the contemporary Indian literary writing needs to be viewed. Some might argue that this is an alien context. But it is not. In the first place, in the world of art and literature today no context is alien. The literary context today is truly international. For T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, E.M. Forster, Paul Scott and a host of other great writers, the context is both the Orient and the Occident.

Moreover, contemporary Indian literature in any of the Indian languages—including, of course, English—is itself the product of the contact with the West through a long period of British rule. While a good deal of it is merely trash imitation of the literature of the West, what is, nevertheless, undeniable is that whatever isolated excellences it has achieved are the product of the fertilizing impact of the diverse and deep Western influences in the various realms of politics, economics, administration, education, science, technology, etc.

In fact, Indian literature, it seems to me, is crying for being viewed in the Western context. It is, unfortunately, a cry which falls flat on the smug, vainglorious, Indian literary critics. They ignore history altogether and, what is still more pathetic, they try to justify it.

Consider, for a while, the state of the Indian literature before the advent of British rule. In the first place, there was no "Indian literature" as such. If anything, it was an aggregate of various regional literatures quite independent of each other.

But they share certain common features. With insignificant exceptions, they are all in the verse form and deal with religious, didactic and romantic themes. Significantly, there is no prose worthy of being treated as literature nor, for that matter, drama. The essay is an unknown genre and literary criticism, in the form as we know it today, an unheard of thing.



In fact, much of Indian literature comprising solely of verse was, even till the consolidation of the Moghul period, in the oral form and meant for a very small number of people in the court of a Maharaja or a Nawab, or, again, in the temples or religious sects. The inclination to write down literature came in a major way with the contact with the Britishers. But, in the beginning, it was all verse—descriptive, narrative, and even dramatic.

Prose in Indian literature was born towards the end of the nineteenth century. By that time, British rule had taken deeper roots in India and the first few crop of English education had been harvested from the newly established universities. In fact, good prose writing in any Indian regional literature—including English—was not done until the beginning of the present century with the rising national consciousness. Bengali, Marathi and Telugu led the way and Hindi followed.

But here two significant facts need to be pointed out in order to adjust the perspective to our present need. First, the introduction of English as the medium of modern scientific-liberal education did not in any way suppress the growth of the Indian regional literatures. On the contrary, it acted catalytically in arousing a literary consciousness in them.

Through learning English and developing an acquaintance with Western literature, Indian writers for the first time in history became aware of the need and possibilities of writing in their own languages. Secondly, they began writing in forms which did not exist in the Indian languages before, such as the novel and the essay. Verse remained—and still, in a sense, remains—a more favourite form of both writers and readers, but gradually the novel rose to establish its own sway.

A typical illustration of both these points is Bankim Chandra Chatterji who wrote his first novel, *Rajmohan's Wife*, in English and then gave up English and wrote his major works in Bangali. This is a typical case, but in some way or the other English education galvanised all other Indian languages towards attempting the new forms of prose, particularly the novel.

But the novel has not yet really struck healthy roots in the Indian soil, and this is solely because of the unsuitability of the soil. Until today, there is nothing in the prose of any Indian

literature to match the excellence it has achieved in poetry. Poetry still is fully at home in the Indian sensibility. Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo Ghosh tower over all other prose writers. Even today, the number of those who have published poems or are writing poems exceeds by far the number of novelists and essayists in any Indian regional literature. And this is certainly true of Indian English as well.

One of the reasons for this is clearly the basic nature of Indian sensibility conditioned through the ages by what we call Indian culture. This basic nature is preponderably intuitive and speculative, didactic and sentimental as distinguished from the Western sensibility which is rational and empirical, and logical and argumentative. In other words, the Indian sensibility has been lacking in intellectual power, which is required immensely in the making of a novel.

The kind of intellectual power needed here is to be distinguished from abstract reasoning and abstruse speculation in which the Indian sensibility excels. It is a selective and analytical power and, at the same time, a cohesive power. It is a faculty which selects things from personal experience, happenings in society, fruits of scientific and technological research, economic and political events and so on and juxtaposes them in such an order or blends them in such a manner that the resultant whole embodies objectively the novelist's meaning and vision.

Indian novelists in any Indian language seem to be concerned wholly with telling a tale to prove or illustrate a social or moral standpoint. Very often the social or moral standpoint acquires more importance than the tale itself. This is easy to do for the Indian novelists who, like other people in the society, have grown in the tradition of parables and fables and allegories abounding in the Sanskrit literature and passed on, partly orally and partly in writing, from generation to generation.

It is not accidental that in a relatively short span of time, the form of the short story has become richer as well as popular in all Indian literatures. The flourishing of journalism no doubt accounts partly for this, but partly the reason is that culturally the Indian sensibility finds itself congenial to work on a very small scale where the problem of intellectual

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organization of parts into the whole is reduced to the minimum

Unfortunately, most Indian novelists appear to write not novels as such they write merely long stories with the same intention of illustrating or proving a moral standpoint. The result is that their works suffer from fragmentariness, sketchiness, superficiality and abstraction.

Take the works of the three of our most celebrated writers in English. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R K Narayan. Anand has a social economic thesis, which is a hodge podge of Marxism and Gandhism. Each of his novels is clearly intended to illustrate the thesis. And in this attempt, the novel ceases to be a novel and turn into a documentary description. Munnoo, the coolie, and Bakha, the untouchable have both the possibilities of developing into fully grown human beings, but they remain puppets of Anand.

The point will be clearer when, in this context, we think of Dickens' *David Copperfield*. While inspired by the same zeal as Anand Dickens never loses track of the plot, of the variety of developing relationships among characters on purely human terms of the growth of David's own experience, and of the overall form of the novel. Dickens in his novel is not anxious to plead for social reform which Anand so obviously is, but *David Copperfield* moves the readers more intimately and strongly than *Coolie* or *The Untouchable*.

The fault of Anand is that he has not been able to select, control and organize his material into the form of the novel. The fault is intellectual and, therefore, aesthetic. He may have made a mixture of Gandhi and Marx but has failed to blend the mixture with his own personal experience and with his artistic experience.

If Anand's novels are social documentaries, Raja Rao's are philosophical abstractions. At least *The Serpent and the Rope* is, though *Kanthapura* tends to be relatively free from philosophizing for its own sake. *The Serpent and the Rope* is not a philosophical novel in the sense in which Huxley's *Eyeless in Giza* or Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* is a philosophical novel where philosophy is inherent in and inseparable from every detail of the character, plot and action.

These comparisons are perhaps unfair because of the huge

difference of talent of the novelists. But the comparisons nevertheless serve to show the extreme lack of intellectual elements in the Indian novels.

In comparison to the novels of Anand and Raja Rao, R K Narayan's novels are more satisfying. In them the intellectual elements have got merged with characterization and plot relatively more completely. For one thing Narayan has no social or philosophical thesis to prove nor any message to convey. Like Chaucer, he is an ironist and a satirist, closely observing the oddities of human nature and using them as means of portraying characters though—it hardly needs saying—he is not a poet, nor do his works encompass the contemporary age.

But, without doubt, Narayan's novels have more intellectual strength than those of Anand and Rao. Anand and Rao use intellect in the service of cheaply sentimental and abstractly philosophical subjects. In the form of pure perorations, their novels would be equally, if not sometimes more, effective. But not so with Narayan's novels in which the intellectual workmanship lies in blending thought and feeling, idea and experience indistinguishably. It could be argued that the level of Narayan's thought and feeling is limited to the surface of social and, only at times, individual manner, which of course, is true. And yet within the limitation, the fusion of intellect and experience is artistically quite satisfying.

The function of intellect in the process of artistic creation is not the same as in the writing of a research thesis. Compilation of data regarding the characters, charting of a plot in action, etc., may be of help to a novelist, but by themselves they are nothing. The intellect functions in establishing relations between character and character, event and event, action and action leading to the emergence of a form which is indistinguishable from the content.

A novelist who knows his job would not isolate himself from the burning social and political problems of his time. In fact he wrestles with them. He is in constant touch with the current political, economic and philosophic ideas and thought. But in his novels he does not use them as they are as he does not use life as it is. Here he awakens his intellectual faculty and harnesses it to the job of assimilating ideas and thought into the fabric of the plot in terms of human situation and action.

The Indian novelists, in general, as is evident from their works, either use intellectual elements much too obviously and crudely or not use them at all. Those belonging to the former category tend to load their novels with incidents and speeches which deal with ideas all right but have not been conceived in human terms, or are not at all related to whatever plot happens to be there. This applies to even such acclaimed Hindi novels as Agyeya's *Shekhar Ek Jiwant*, Jainendra Kumar's *Sukhada* and Bhagawati Charan Verma's *Chitrlekha* and Tede Mede *Raaste*. Similar is the case of Phanishwar Nath Renu's *Maila Anchal*, rich in poetic resources, but poor in intellectual elements. The only novelist in Hindi whose works tend to acquire a harmonious blend of thought and emotion is Prem Chand. Among the recent novelists, Lalji Shukla in *Raag Darbari* gave some promise of using the intellect creatively, but his subsequent novels have belied the promise.

Like any other art, the novel is rooted in the complex human situation and it is most suited to deal with the complex modern age. But its mode of working is different. It works through details, local and personal details, and builds up step by step a huge architectonic form, an embodiment of the novelist's view of life.

Because of the lack of intellectual power, the Indian novelists begin with generalization and continue to indulge in generalization throughout. They are impatient to preach, condemn, idealize, philosophize and moralize. They write with abundant sentiments and overflowing feelings—and most of them unexperienced—which may be material for poetry (bad poetry, no doubt) but are unfit for the novel, unless they are crystalized by intellect into objective details.

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